This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.
+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.
+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEDL TRANSFER
HN БРКС Н

Digitized by Google

(№ 826-J-
v-1-

LIBRARY · OF
STATE · NORMAL · SCHOOL
SALEM · MASS

GIFT · OF _____

1121

C9867

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

THE WRITINGS

OF

JANE TAYLOR.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS

AND

CORRESPONDENCE

OF

JANE TAYLOR.

School Library Edition

VOL. I.

NEW YORK:
SAXTON & MILES,
205 Broadway.
1846.

Digitized by Google

*KC 986H

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
HC*104

Digitized by Google

TO E********

The following Memoir of my late sister I have aimed to compose as if it had been intended especially for your perusal:—to you, then, it is dedicated. In keeping this idea before me, I have hoped to execute my task in a manner the most acceptable to the class of readers whom I would chiefly wish to please;—I mean persons like yourself, to whom, through her writings, the name of Jane Taylor has been associated with some of their earliest intellectual pleasures, and perhaps, with their first impressions of virtue and piety.

Long before you personally knew your late friend, you were taught to think of her as your guide and instructress; and when at length you were introduced to her, every preconceived feeling of respect and love was enhanced. The period of your intercourse with her was indeed almost entirely filled with a succession of painful

Digitized by Google

events; yet they all tended to fix in your heart an affectionate remembrance which time will not efface.

I may therefore feel assured that, even independently of the new interest you possess in the name and character of my sister, you will be pleased to learn all that I can retrace of her history—of her habits of life—her occupations—her friendships, and her conduct amidst the ordinary occasions of common life.

But while I am endeavoring to give as much explicitness to my narrative as shall satisfy your wishes, and as much, especially, as may render the extracts from her Correspondence fully intelligible, you will perceive that I shall be embarrassed with a considerable difficulty in having to separate the personal history of my sister from that of her family. To do so as completely as I should wish, is plainly impracticable; especially as her character and habits were such as united her most closely in every thing with those she loved. I must, therefore, in many instances, dismiss the fear of being charged with egotism; and rather than omit particulars which to you, and to

Digitized by Google

readers like yourself, may seem interesting and instructive, shall use ingenuousness, and claim the candor that the peculiarity of the case demands.

Yet so far as it may be done consistently with my avowed design, I shall detach what relates to the subject of this Memoir from the interests of those with whom, in fact, she was always most intimately joined. Let it then suffice once to say, that an exemption is claimed for the living, from the demands of that curiosity which it is usual to gratify, relative to the dead who have occupied a place in public esteem.

Nor, I must add, is it solely on behalf of survivors that such exemption may be asked; for even in what relates to the deceased, a biographer must be considered as free to give or to withhold the facts of personal history.—There may have been events of the deepest interest to the party, in reference to which he may be silent; even though the full narration of such facts might serve, beyond any others, to display the strength or christian fortitude of the character he has to exhibit. The common cares and griefs of life

Digitized by Google

may be described for the edification of others; but there are sorrows that are sacred; and sorrows still fresh in the memory of survivors are especially so: for though the subject of them be passed where "there is no more pain, neither sorrow nor weeping," yet, as for our own feelings' sake, we hide the mortal remains of the dead, so should we shroud their recent griefs.

By the indulgence of her friends, I have had the perusal of nearly* the entire mass of letters written by my sister during the course of five and twenty years: from this mass it would have been easy to furnish volumes without admitting any less interesting than those which have been selected. But many reasons forbade so copious

* I ought to mention a large exception made by the suppression of the whole of her letters to one much-loved friend. This suppression occasions, besides the loss, as I doubt not, of many interesting passages, a very important deficiency in the materials of the Memoir; as my sister's intimacy with this one friend constituted, of itself, a great part of the history of her mind, during many years. That so little trace of this friendship appears in the Memoir, or among the Extracts from the Correspondence, is not attributable to the option of her biographer. Memorials of the strength and tenderness of this friendship are, however to be found among the Poetical Remains.

Digitized by Google

and indiscriminate a publication. You have seen enough of your late friend's letters to know that the lively interest she felt in every thing that concerned her friends, filled a great part of almost all of them with allusions to *their* concerns; and, of course, the publication of such passages would have been a violation of the confidence reposed in me by her correspondents. Hence it is, that there is scarcely an entire letter in the collection; but the exscinded parts will not often seem wanting to the reader.

The constitutional pensiveness of my sister's mind was, as you know, relieved by a peculiar playfulness of fancy; so that she turned in an instant, from the pathetic, to the humorous, without any violence to her own feelings, and—to those who knew her intimately—without any unpleasing abruptness of manner: yet, to many readers, some of these sudden transitions might give offence, or seem to require explanation. But whether grave or gay, all with her, was genuine:—her letters give the true image of her mind; and will hold up a living portrait of her character. You know how strong was her dislike of the least semblance of affectation; and of

Digitized by Google

all the kinds of affectation, there was none she more abhorred than that which too frequently appears in the conversation and letters of persons who think they have some literary reputation to support. Rather than seem chargeable with this fault, she would restrain every excursion of her fancy, and repress all the playfulness of her wit. —Those who knew her manner, when quite at ease, will trace the influence of this strong feeling in many of her letters. "Some people," she says, "think it a great recommendation to be able to write *a clever letter;* but if there is any thing I dislike to receive, or that I am unambitious of writing, it is *a clever letter;* by which I mean a letter that exhibits, obviously, an endeavor to be smart and pointed; or, worse still, fine and sentimental."

And besides this dread of literary affectation, my sister had so decided a taste for all that is practical, useful, and important in common life, that her pursuit of the embellishments and the luxuries of intellect was greatly restrained. She would rather forego the gratifications of taste, than seem, in any thing, to trifle. Especially in the latter years of her life, a peculiarly deep im-

Digitized by Google

pression of the great objects of christian faith, and of the obligations of christian duty, inclined her to estimate, as of very trivial importance, many of the pursuits which engross the attention of cultivated minds. To the interests and affections of common life, she never became indifferent; but what belonged not to the *heart*, or to present duty, was lost to her in the light of the life to come. This spirit is apparent in many of her letters of late date; and indeed ruled her habitual feelings. The expression used by her in the letter written the day before her death, to yourself, and your sisters, far from being extorted by the instant terrors of dissolution, conveyed, truly, the settled conviction of her mind—that, "the whole business of life is preparation for death."—My desire in fulfilling the charge committed to me will be faithfully to exhibit her example, so as shall tend to enforce this her last testimony.

I T

Stanford Rivers, Sept. 23, 1825

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

MEMOIRS

&c.

CHAPTER I.

INFANCY AND CHILDHOOD AT LAVENHAM.

JANE, their second daughter, was born September 23, 1783, while her parents resided in London. From her birth, and during the first two years of infancy, her constitution seemed so delicate, and her health so precarious, that it was hardly expected she would survive that critical period. But happily, before she had completed her third year, Mr. Taylor removed with his family into the country, and from that time she appeared to take a new possession of life; and soon acquired the bloom and vivacity of perfect health.

His engagements as an artist being such as allowed him to reside at a distance from London, Mr. Taylor gladly availed himself of this liberty to establish his fast-increasing family where the same means would procure a much larger amount

Digitized by Google

of comfort than in London; and where health, and all the best enjoyments of life are much more likely to be secured. It was in the summer of the year 1786, that my father and mother, with their two little girls, removed to Lavenham in Suffolk. Ann, the eldest, was then in the fifth, and Jane in the third year of her age; and were therefore able to enjoy with their parents the simple pleasures and extended comforts of their new habitation. Accustomed as she had been to the narrow bounds, and to the many restraints of a London house, Jane's spirits broke forth with unusual emotions of pleasure amid the ample space, and the agreeable objects that now surrounded her.

Very soon after her removal to the country, Jane displayed, not merely a healthy vivacity and childlike eagerness in the amusements provided for her by her fond parents, but an uncommon fertility of invention in creating pleasures for herself:—It was evident to those who observed her, that, even from her third or fourth year, the little girl inhabited a fairy land, and was perpetually occupied with the imaginary interests of her teeming fancy. "I can remember," says her sister, "that Jane was always the saucy, lively entertaining little thing—the amusement and the favorite of all that knew her. At the baker's shop she used to be placed on the kneading-board, in order to recite, preach, narrate, &c. to the great entertainment of his many visiters. And at Mr.

Digitized by Google

Blackadder's she was the life and fun of the farmer's hearth. Her plays, from the earliest that I can recollect, were deeply imaginative; and I think that in 'Moll and Bet'—'The Miss Parks'—'The Miss Sisters'—'The Miss Bandboxes,' and 'Aunt and Niece,' which I believe is the entire catalogue of them, she lived in a world wholly of her own creation, with as deep a feeling of reality as life itself could afford. These lasted from the age of three or four, till ten or twelve. About the latter time her favorite employment, in play time, was whipping a top; during the successful spinning of which she composed tales and dramas, some of which she afterwards committed to paper. She would spend hours in this kind of revery, in the large unfurnished parlor, at our own house at Lavenham. But I think I may say that the retiring character of her mind—a morbid sensibility towards things and persons *without*, as well as much refined feeling, operated to prevent a *due* estimate being formed of her talent, till much later in life. I need not tell you, that they were never made a show of to any body. But timid as she was in and about herself, she had the courage of enterprise in the service of those she loved;—she was, you know, the presenter of every petition for holydays and special favors, and the spirited *foremost* in every youthful plan."

This early and unusual activity of the imagination Jane afterwards lamented. "I do believe," she says, "that this habit of *castle-building* is

Digitized by Google

very injurious to the mind I know I have sometimes lived so much in a *castle*, as almost to forget that I lived in a *house*." Had she continued in London it is probable that, with the dim impressions of a sickly frame, and the sombre dulness of surrounding objects, the imagination would have continued in its germ till it had been quickened by the feverish excitements of riper years. But surely there is a better hope for the character when this faculty expands during the innocence of infancy, and amid the fair scenes of nature; for these first pure impressions tend to preoccupy the fancy, and to give a lasting direction to the tastes.

The house occupied by Mr. Taylor at Lavenham was situated in a street of detached dwellings, of a humbler class than itself, at the outskirts of the town. These cottages were inhabited chiefly by the poor employed in the woollen manufacture, which, at that time still lingered in this neighborhood, where it had formerly greatly flourished. The scene which this street exhibited on a summer's day, forty years ago, is now hardly anywhere to be observed. The spinning wheel was planted on the foot-way before every door, and the females of each family wrought in groups of young and old together. Perhaps it ought not to be much regretted that industry has ceased to be *picturesque*; but surely the common enjoyments of life were less incompatible with the severities of labor then than they are now, among those who

Digitized by Google

spend their long days in close ranks, around the steam engine.

My father's house was sufficiently spacious to afford apartments in which the children might be left to their amusements without restraint. A pleasant, and rather large garden adjoined the house: it was open towards the country, and a long and wide grass walk, reaching its whole length, was terminated at the upper end by an arbour, in the oldfashioned style, and at the other by a haw-haw; beyond which were pastures, a rugged common, and more distant corn-fields. In this garden the sisters were very early companions in song: and they were wont, before the eldest was six years old, to pace up and down the green walks, hand in hand, lisping a simple couplet of their joint composition.

From the time of their removal to Lavenham, Jane and her sister were indulged with a small room, not used as a nursery, but given up to them as their exclusive domain, and furnished with all their little apparatus of amusement. And either abroad, or in this apartment, they learned to depend upon their own invention for their diversions; for it was always a part of their parents' plan of education to afford to their children both *space* and *materials* for furnishing entertainment to themselves. And so much were they all accustomed to exercise invention, for filling up agreeably the hours of liberty, that I doubt if ever their

Digitized by Google

father or mother was applied to with the listless inquiry—"What shall I play at?"

Jane became, at this time, so much known among neighbors and friends, as "a most diverting little thing," that her company was courted, and herself flattered in a degree that would have injured the disposition of most children; and it is not affirmed that she was wholly unhurt by it; but with all her spirit and vivacity, such was her timidity, that no feeling of vanity or obtrusiveness seemed to be produced by these attentions.—She received the plaudits of her audience at the baker's shop, or in the farmer's Christmas party, much in the same way that she afterwards heard the expression of public favor:—both might give a momentary stimulus to the exertion of her talent; but neither the one nor the other impaired or disturbed her native and habitual diffidence. This early celebrity did not fail to excite the watchful fears of her parents; and so far as it was possible to prevent it, Jane was restrained from thus furnishing amusement to the neighborhood, at so great a hazard to her simplicity. But a fast-increasing family unavoidably left her at times under the care of servants, who were gratified at having so much talent to exhibit.

At what age precisely, Jane began to write verses and tales, I have not been able to ascertain. But some pieces have been preserved which, there is reason to believe, were written in her

Digitized by Google

eighth year. Even a year or two earlier, it is remembered, that she had furnished her memory with histories, which she used to recite with such variations as the inspiration of the moment might suggest. And though, of course, no idea of the kind had ever been given her by her parents (and no other persons had access to her who would have thought of any such thing), yet it seems that, as soon as she began to write at all, she cherished the ambition of writing a *book*. Most of her childish scribblings have the form of something prepared for the public: I have before me, of this early date, prefaces, title-pages, introductions and dedications: among these the following is so characteristic that I shall venture to produce it. It appears to have been written in her tenth year.—

PREFACE.

To be a poetess I don't aspire.
From such a title humbly I retire;
But now and then a line I try to write;
Though bad they are—not worthy human sight.

Sometimes into my hand I take a pen,
Without the hope of aught but mere chagrin
I scribble, then leave off in sad despair,
And make a blot in spite of all my care.

I laugh and talk, and preach a sermon well;
Go about begging, and your fortune tell:
As to my poetry, indeed 't is all
As good and worse by far than none at all.

Digitized by Google

Have patience yet I pray, peruse my book;
Although you smile when on it you do look:
I know that in 't there 's many a shocking failure;
But that forgive—the author is Jane Taylor.

It was perhaps a year later that she addressed to her father the following

PETITION.

Ah dear papa! did you but know
The trouble of your Jane,
I 'm sure you would relieve me now,
And ease me of my pain.

Although your garden is but small,
And more indeed you crave,
There's one small bit, not used at all,
And this I wish to have.

A pretty garden I would make,
That you would like, I know;
Then pray, papa, for pity's sake,
This bit of ground bestow.

For whether now I plant or sow,
The chickens eat it all;
I 'd fain my sorrows let you know
But for the tears that fall.

My garden then should be your lot;
I 've often heard you say,
There useful trees you wish to put,
But mine were in the way.

Digitized by Google

But for the most part, Jane confided her productions to no one except her sister; and the extent to which she indulged the propensity to write, at this early age, was unknown to her parents. Indeed the habit of scribbling was purely spontaneous; and never cherished by encouragement from her father or mother. The whole intention of their plan of education was to fit their children for the discharge of the ordinary duties of life; and to elicit or to display *talent* was far from being their ambition. A home education having been early determined upon, was systematically pursued, through a course of years. Jane and her sister spent a part of every day with their father, receiving from him the rudiments of that education of the nature of which I shall have occasion hereafter to speak; and a considerable part with their mother, who, from the first, made her daughters her *companions*, treating them, and conversing with them as reasonable beings. They were accustomed to attend and to assist her in every domestic engagement, learning at once the reason and the practice of all that was done. In the afternoon and evening, while employed by their mother's side, subjects of all kinds, within the range of their comprehension, were discussed. These conversations were at intervals relieved by singing hymns—a practice which tends, insensibly, to blend all the best and happiest emotions of the infant heart with the language of piety.

It was especially the practice of their mother in

Digitized by Google

her treatment of her children, to avoid every thing like *manœuvering* or mystery, as well as all unnecessary concealment of the reasons of her conduct towards them. She confided in them as *friends;* and at the earliest time at which such ideas could enter their minds, they were acquainted with their father's affairs; so far at least as was necessary to qualify them to sympathize in every care, and to induce them to adapt their own feelings and expectations to their parents' means. This plan, moreover, preserved them, as far as children can be preserved, from the temptation to practise those petty artifices which debase the mind, and benumb the conscience.

As it formed a material part of Jane's intellectual education, I may here mention a custom adopted by her mother a year or two before the time of which I am now speaking—that of reading aloud at every meal. Her hearing being so far defective as to prevent her from freely taking part in conversation, she had recourse to a book that the social hours might not be hours of silence. By constant use she acquired the habit of taking her food with little interruption to the reading; and only on occasions of extreme ill health was it ever wholly suspended. This practice, while it was a solace and delight to herself, and in some degree enabled her to forget her misfortune in being shut out from free intercourse with her family—to them proved, directly and indirectly, highly beneficial, especially in preventing unprofit-

Digitized by Google

able conversation, in cherishing a literary taste, and in imparting, without labor or cost of time, a great mass of information:—and the choice of books was always made with a view to the pleasure and advantage of the younger members of the family.

No part of Jane's character was more prominent and distinguishing than her susceptibility of feelings of tender, generous, and constant friendship; this disposition displayed itself as early as her propensity to write; and seemed, indeed, to awaken her talent.

Her affection for her sister was of the liveliest kind; but besides this intimacy, she early found a companion who became the object of a more than child-like regard. Ann and Jane W. were respectively about the same age as Ann and Jane Taylor: their parents were distinguished in their circle by good sense, superior education, and excellence of character. Their large family, of which Ann and Jane were the youngest members, was remarkably well-ordered and intelligent. The four girls, with the full acquiescence of their parents, became very constant companions; and continued to be so till the removal of this family from Lavenham.

My sister always thought herself peculiarly happy in her friendships; and this early intimacy, though soon to be dissolved, prepared her for the enjoyment of some that were more lasting and important in after-life

Digitized by Google

It was with a much more lively sorrow than most children of ten years old would have felt on such an occasion, that Jane parted forever with her friend Jane W. Mr. W., though a man of grave manners, settled habits, and remarkable sobriety of judgment, and though bound to his country, if not by other feelings, at least by extensive connexions, and large mercantile concerns, broke away from all to establish himself with his family in New England. And in this instance the voluntary banishment proved more fortunate than many that took place at the same time. An occasional correspondence was continued between my sisters and their young friends for upwards of twenty years. I will here introduce a monument of Jane's warm attachment to her first friend, written in her eleventh year: it breathes the spirit, that has always distinguished her.

TO MISS JANE W.

ON HER LEAVING ENGLAND

Alas! it must be,
  My ever dear Jane,
You must part with me:
  We must not meet again.

Accept then, my dear,
  These verses from me;
Although I do fear
  Far too mean they be.

Digitized by Google

I love you, believe,
  My Jane and my friend!
How much should I grieve
  If our friendship should end.

But this cannot be,
  Believe me sincere,
Though th' Atlantic sea
  Should part us, my dear.

Remember your Jane,
  When alone in the grove:
Forget not her name;—
  She will ever you love.

You soon sure will find
  A friend that is new:
Don't push Jane behind,
  But remember her too.

Adieu, then, my friend;
  The thought gives me pain;
My love shall not end;
  So remember your Jane.

In the winter of the year 1792, the comfort of the family and the education of the children were, for a long time, interrupted by the dangerous illness of their father. Throughout this season of affliction their mother's thoughts and cares were almost entirely confined to the chamber of sickness. For, during many weeks, her husband's recovery seemed to herself, and to his medical attendants, very improbable; and long after the

Digitized by Google

immediate danger had passed away, he required not less the incessant attention of his anxious partner, who never willingly left him for an instant to the care of hirelings. In these months of sorrow and fear, the children, now five in number, were therefore unavoidably abandoned to the neglects and the improper treatment of servants. And not only was the course of their education interrupted, but their mother was tortured by knowing that their minds and manners were exposed to those evil influences from which, hitherto, her vigilance had, in so great a degree, preserved them. Nevertheless, she had then, as she has ever had, this comforting reflection, that it was not by their mother's fondness for dissipating pleasures that her children were ever exposed for a day—nor an hour, to the society of servants.

Soon after Mr. Taylor's recovery from this illness, being obliged to leave the house he had hitherto rented, he purchased, and nearly rebuilt one adjoining to it. In this new abode family order and comfort were soon restored. The house was commodious, and the garden promised to become all that could be wished; and being in part newly retrieved from the waste, afforded the pleasures of formation and improvement. The storm of affliction having passed away, a fair sky seemed to smile upon the distant future. But this agreeable prospect was soon wholly changed; and a sphere of new duties was opened, by the indications of Divine Providence, to my father's

Digitized by Google

christian zeal. The particular circumstances which led to this change belong not to my subject; —they were, however, such as made him think it his duty to abandon the comforts with which he had just surrounded himself, and to comply with the wishes of a dissenting congregation at Colchester, to become their minister. Early in the year 1796, he removed to that town, with his family, and assumed the pastoral care of the society assembling in the meeting-house in Bucklersbury-lane.

CHAPTER II.

EDUCATION AND EARLY FRIENDSHIPS AT COLCHESTER.

Jane was in her thirteenth year at the time of the removal of the family to Colchester.

Changes in scene and circumstance are, to minds so much alive, as was Jane's, to the full force of every impression, the occasions of important and permanent changes in the character; and therefore become worthy of passing notice in its history. Colchester being then the station of a large body of troops, the utmost activity prevailed throughout the town; and its broad and handsome High Street was a perpetual scene of gay and busy movement. Its many interesting antiquities,

Digitized by Google

also, and the agreeable country by which it is surrounded were sources of new pleasures. The house occupied by Mr. Taylor during his stay at Colchester, though situated near the centre of the town, had attached to it a garden, which, under his care, very soon became agreeable; and was so much so to Jane, that it is frequently alluded to in her letters, as the scene of her happiest hours.

The course of his children's instruction was soon resumed by my father after his settlement at Colchester. Our parents were agreed in their decided preference of a *home* education, at least for their daughters, who, with the exception of a few lessons in the lighter accomplishments, received from their father their entire instruction; his engagements being such as allowed him to superintend their learning without inconvenience. They have ever thought themselves indebted to him for solid advantages, which greatly overbalanced the value of any accomplishments they might better have gained at school. It may be permitted to me here to say that his methods of teaching were peculiarly happy, in being at once lucid, comprehensive, and facile to the learner. He aimed less to impart those shreds of information, which serve for little except to deck out ignorance with the show of knowledge, than to expand the mind by a general acquaintance with all the more important objects of science: so that, in whatever direction, in after life, his children

Digitized by Google

might pursue their studies, they might find the difficulties attending the first steps on unknown ground already overcome. It was also in his view, a principal object to prevent the formation of a narrow and exclusive taste for particular pursuits, by exciting, very early, a lively interest on subjects of every kind. The influence of this comprehensive system on Jane's tastes was very apparent in after life.* For though, by the conformation of her mind, she most frequented the regions of imagination, and of moral sentiment; she always retained so genuine a taste for pursuits of an opposite kind, as at once to impart the spirit of liberality to her mind, and to become the source of richness and variety in her writings. The result to herself of the kind of education she received, she has well expressed when, in describing a true taste, she says, that—"while it will stoop to inspect and admire the most minute and laborious operations of industry, and while it feels an interest and sympathy in every branch of knowledge, it returns with a natural bias towards that which is most comprehensive in science, most intellectual in art, and most sublime in nature."

In the new circle of friends to which the family was introduced at Colchester, were some persons of superior education and intelligence; and

* Her opinions on this subject she has given in several of the papers contributed to the Youth's Magazine; especially in that "On a Liberal Taste."

Digitized by Google

among the many young persons with whom my sisters presently became acquainted, Jane soon found a friend with whom, until death intervened, she maintained an affectionate intimacy. Peculiarly formed for friendship, she was peculiarly happy in her friends—except in having several, most dear to her, torn from her by early death:—such was the case in the present instance. Jane's new friend was the youngest of the four lovely daughters of a physician, esteemed for the excellence of his private character, as well as for his professional ability. He died about the time of which I am speaking; leaving a widow, four daughters, and a son. The intercourse of this family with ours, during several years, was so intimate and frequent, as to claim mention in this memoir, especially as they are frequently referred to in Jane's correspondence.

The eldest of these young ladies was distinguished in an eminent degree by intelligence and sweetness of disposition, and loveliness of manners and of person. Her charm was that of blended dignity and gentleness. Not long after the commencement of my sister's intimacy with this family, she exhibited symptoms of the malady of which, in the course of a few years, herself and her sisters, were the victims; and died, after spending two or three years in frequent, but hopeless changes of scene, among her friends. The second daughter, though less lovely in person, and less gentle in disposition than her elder

Digitized by Google

sister, endeared herself to her friends by the affectionate warmth and candor of her disposition. The progress of her fatal illness was more rapid than in the case of her sister:—she died in the preceding year, at a distance from her home; and her younger sister soon was laid in the same grave. Jane's friend was little inferior either in intelligence or in loveliness to her eldest sister. Many of the letters that passed between her and Jane are before me, and although there is not a little of girlish romance in them, they afford proofs enough of great energy of character on the one part, and of much warmth and tenderness of feeling, and originality of thought on the other.

This young lady quickly followed her three sisters to the grave. She had been sent, more than once, to the West of England; and died, on her way thither, at Basingstoke, December 12, 1806. Her death, under the peculiar circumstances which attended it, made a deep impression upon the mind of her friend; and is indeed so fraught with instruction that it may well claim a page in this memoir.

The mild and gentle spirit of their mother did not supply to these young women the loss they had sustained in the death of their father. They soon learned to pay too little deference to her wishes and opinions; and finding herself unable, by gentle measures, to control the high spirits of her daughters, she left them, with a faint show of

Digitized by Google

opposition, to follow their own tastes. Her inefficient influence seemed rather to accelerate than retard their abandonment of the principles—or prejudices, as they were fondly called, of their education. And so eager were they to "think for themselves," that a very short time sufficed to confirm them in the contempt of every principle they had received from their parents. This tendency of their minds to discard whatever they had been taught in matters of belief, was unhappily aggravated by their witnessing a general laxity of manners, and some flagrant scandals among the religionists whose creed was already the object of their scorn. And such offences are sure to produce the utmost mischief in the minds of young persons whose education, while it has elevated their notions of the requirements of christianity, has failed to affect themselves with the spirit of piety.

In addition to such unfavorable circumstances on the one side, these young ladies were exposed, on the other, to the most seductive influence from the connexions they had lately formed at a distance from home. Many of their new friends were persons at once intelligent, refined in manners, amiable in temper, and perfectly versed in all the specious glozings of Socinianism. And Socinianism at that time was much more *specious* than at present. For, within the intervening period, the course of controversy has deprived its

Digitized by Google

professors of an advantage—so important to the success of infidel insinuations—that of having itself no defined system of principles to defend.

In the society of persons of this class these intelligent young women quickly imbibed the spirit, and learned the language of universal disbelief; and whatever might have been their early devotional feelings, they became confessedly irreligious in their tastes, and habits. This change was but little obvious in the placid temper of the eldest of them. She was, indeed, fascinated with the showy simplicity of this masked deism, and perplexed by its sophistries; but she thought and felt too much ever to be perfectly satisfied with the opinions she had adopted:—her mind had rather been entangled than convinced. During her illness she seemed anxious to retrace her steps; and in the last days of her life she earnestly recommended her sisters to addict themselves with greater seriousness and humility, to the reading of the scriptures; and died imploring, with mournful indecision, to be "saved in God's own way."

Jane's friend was not at all less forward than her sisters, to renounce what she termed—"the errors of her education;"—she was even more determined and dogmatical than some of them in her new professions. This difference of opinion, along with other circumstances, had lessened the intimacy between the two:—they maintained, however, to the last, a friendly correspondence

Digitized by Google

though the subject of religion was, by the desire of the former, banished from their letters.

After many changes of place, she once more left Colchester, accompanied by her mother, on her way to Devonshire; but was soon compelled to make her last home at an inn on the road; where she lingered more than three months. The disappointment of her strong wish to reach Exeter, awakened her to the knowledge of her immediate danger; and this apprehension was soon succeeded by all the terrors of an affrighted conscience. The conviction of being an offender against the Divine Law, and exposed, without shelter, to its sanctions, took such full possession of her spirit that, for a length of time, she rejected all consolation: and endured an agony of fear, in expectation of dying without the hope of the Gospel. At length, however, her mind admitted freely and joyfully the "only hope set before us;"[22] and she fully and explicitly renounced the illusions by which she had been betrayed; declaring them to be utterly insufficient to satisfy an awakened conscience, in the prospect of standing at the bar of the Supreme Judge. She lived long enough to display many of the effects of this happy change:—the whole temper of her mind was renovated; she became patient, thankful, affectionate, and humble; and triumphed in the profession of her hope:—"My hope," she said, "is in Christ—in Christ crucified:—and I would not give up *that hope*, for all the world."

Digitized by Google

The course of the memoir has been anticipated by this digression: I must now revert to the time of my sister's first acquaintance with these young ladies. The close intimacy and very frequent intercourse of the two families very greatly promoted the mental improvement of all parties; for there were advantages of different kinds possessed by each, which very fairly balanced the mutual benefit. About this time, that is, when Jane was in her fifteenth year, the six friends, in conjunction with two or three others, formed themselves into a society for the reading of original essays, and the promotion of intellectual improvement. Jane's diffidence of her own powers, her peculiar dread of *competition*, as well as her being one of the youngest members of the society, prevented her from standing very forward in these exercises; but she filled up her part well; and some of the pieces read at the meetings of the society present plain indications of that originality of thought, soundness of sentiment, and sprightliness and simplicity of style, which have since distinguished her writings. But Jane was then, and indeed long after that time, afraid to believe that she had any talent; and it is certain that a belief of the possession, is necessary to the full exercise of intellectual endowments. Nevertheless the part she took in this society very evidently ripened her powers of thinking, and accustomed her to govern the excursions of her fancy. From this time, what she wrote was oftener in the form

Digitized by Google

of didactic essays, than in that of tales and romances. To what extent she continued to write verses, does not appear:—a few pieces only of this date have been preserved. But as they neither possess the interest that belongs to the earliest specimens of talent, nor the intrinsic excellence of maturer productions, I shall not obtrude them on the reader.

CHAPTER III.

RELIGIOUS FEELINGS—FAMILY CUSTOMS—EMPLOYMENTS AND RECREATIONS.

Every means of habitual instruction, and occasional admonition, were employed by our parents to affect the hearts of their children with religious principles: and there is reason to believe that Jane, very early, received strong impressions of this kind. But being reserved and timid by disposition, and peculiarly distrustful of herself, little was known of the state of her mind. Her imagination, susceptible as it was in the highest degree of impressions of fear, rendered her liable, at times, to those deep and painful emotions which belong to a conscience that is enlightened, but not fully pacified. And these feelings, when blended with the pensiveness of her tender heart, gave a character of mournfulness and distress to her religious feelings during several years. Re-

Digitized by Google

ligious principles, if thus clouded, must always be less influential than when the mind is in a happier state; for the heart cannot be favorably ruled by fear: yet they were not destitute of influence upon her conduct; and I find, dated in her fourteenth year, records of pious resolutions, and emphatic expressions of the sense she had of the supreme importance of the objects of christian faith. Some unfinished verses, written about this time, were evidently composed under the influence of feelings too strong to allow of the exercise of her poetic talent:—they are interesting as records of deep and genuine religious feeling; but are too rude for publication.

A religious education, meeting with feelings so highly excitable, and at the same time exposed to many fascinations, is likely to produce frequent and painful conflicts between opposing principles, before that peace is obtained which makes religion the source of all that is happy and excellent in the character. Such was, for a length of time, the state of my sister's mind. But I believe that though often perplexed and distressed by seeming difficulties, her conviction of the truth of revealed religion was never materially shaken; and her *habitual* belief in its reality was full and firm: and in the latter years of her life, I think I may say, it was never disturbed. Every word on the subject of religion, contained, either in her letters to her friends, or in her published writings, was the genuine expression of an unfeigned faith.

Digitized by Google

In a letter to a friend, Jane says, "Our early friendships, though they must ever be remembered with interest and fond affection, were little adapted to promote our truest welfare; though to them, indeed, we are indebted for many benefits of a less valuable nature."

With our parents, the only choice at this time was, either to seclude their children from all society; or to allow them such as was within their reach, though not altogether of the kind they would have wished. The first alternative was hardly practicable; and, in admitting the latter, many advantages of a secondary kind were enjoyed. But the effect, upon the minds of young persons, of frequenting the society of those in whose conversation and manners religious principle or feeling does not appear, will almost inevitably be to render what they know of religion the source of uneasiness, and of fruitless conflicts between conscience and inclination: and if, at the same time, much of hollow religionism is witnessed by them, the probable result will be either immovable indifference, or confirmed infidelity. Happily neither of these effects were produced upon the mind of my sister; but instead of them, her religious comfort was impaired long afterwards, by the habit of feeling then formed.

That religion was the subject of her habitual regard, will appear by the following passages from letters of early date:—

"O it is hard fighting in our own strength

Digitized by Google

against the evil bias of the heart, and external enemies. Their united forces are, I am daily more convinced, far too much for anything but grace to overcome. No good resolutions, no efforts of reason, no desire to please, can alone succeed:—they may varnish the character; but O! how insufficient are such motives for the trying occasions of common life. I would shine most at home; yet I would not be good for the sake of shining; but for its own sake; and when thus I trace the subject to first principles, I find a change of heart can alone effect what I desire; that 'new heart and right spirit' which is the gift of God."

To the same friend, soon after, she writes—

"I am grieved, my dear E., to hear from you so melancholy an account of the state of your mind; I wish I were a more able counsellor; or rather, I wish you would overcome your feelings, and apply to those whose consolations and advice might be useful to you. I can sincerely sympathize with you in all your griefs. I rejoice in having obtained your confidence; and I cannot make a better use of it than to urge you to seek some abler adviser. I speak from experience when I say, how much benefit you might derive from an open communication of your feelings to your dear mother. Well do I know how difficult it is; yet the good to be gained is worthy the effort. You say she is so total a stranger to your feelings, that she even supposes you to be an enemy to re-

Digitized by Google

ligious principles. If then you consider the pleasure it would afford her to find you seriously inquiring on such subjects, I think you will feel it to be an additional argument for the disclosure. Two or three years ago, my mind was in a state of extreme depression:—for months I had been conflicting with the most distressing fears, and longing to disburden myself to my father: at last I could no longer support myself, and breaking through, what I had thought insurmountable difficulties, I opened my mind to him completely. It was a struggle; but the immediate relief I experienced fully repaid me; and the unspeakable benefit I have derived from the conversations I have since, from time to time, held with him encourages me to persevere."

"Mr.—— was very urgent with me not to give way to that unhappy reluctance to converse on religious subjects, so common to young persons: he says we do not know how much we are our own enemies by this reserve. If I understand you aright, you are giving way to discontent as to your outward circumstances. 'The heart knoweth its own bitterness,' and it is not for me to say you *are* happy; yet from all I know of you—your *friends*, *circumstances*, and *prospects*, you are one of the last persons whose situation would excite my commiseration. When I feel disposed to indulge discontent or fretfulness, which, alas! is sometimes the case—I always find it a good way to compare myself with the thousands of my fel-

Digitized by Google

low creatures who are exposed to the miseries of poverty and want;—miseries which I never knew, and in the absence of which, I invent calamities, which the smallest exposure to those *real* ones would presently put to flight. But these reflections, consolatory as they may be, will not always avail to restore our comfort. Discontent, no doubt much oftener springs from internal causes, than immediately from those that are external: with affectionate friends, affluent circumstances, and while in the possession of all the world calls good, one may be very miserable. Happiness is very much in our own power; for it depends much more upon what we are than upon what we *have*. But now I cannot help laughing at myself; for at this instant while recommending contentedness to you, I am indulging an internal murmur, and vexing at what I ought to account a trifle; so much easier is it to talk, or to write, than to act!"

The tendency of the education bestowed upon his children by their father, as I have already said, was to give them a taste for every branch of knowledge that can well be made the subject of early instruction. This general taste was greatly promoted among them about this time—that is, when Jane was in her sixteenth year,—by Mr. Taylor's delivering philosophical lectures to a number of young persons who were, in part, his pupils; and which were frequented by many of their friends The lectures were rendered inter-

Digitized by Google

esting by numerous graphic illustrations of every subject; and in the preparation of these diagrams, my father was assisted by his children, who were thus familiarized, in the readiest way, with the topics of the lecture. Though Jane's peculiar taste was of a different kind, she entered with the fullest zest into these pursuits; and ever retained a relish for matters of science. Especially for the general and more interesting facts of astronomy, she possessed a genuine taste. Her eye was never indifferent to the revelations of night;—she describes her own feelings in saying—

> "I used to roam and revel 'mid the stars:
>
> * * * *
>
> When in my attic, with untold delight,
> I watched the changing splendours of the night."

Their father determined to qualify his daughters to provide for themselves the means of independence, in some way suited to their tastes and capacities, and to his own circumstances. With this view, no plan seemed more eligible than to instruct them in that branch of the arts which he himself practised;—being a line in which several females have succeeded in gaining, not only independence, but distinction as artists. This plan, moreover, offered at the same time the advantage —so highly prized by our parents, of retaining their entire family under the paternal roof; and of carrying on a home education, while provision was made for their future comfort.

Digitized by Google

The actual consequences of this plan were not indeed precisely what their father had intended—that of making his daughters artists by profession; for after practising engraving during a few years, engagements and duties of a different kind were opened to them. But the indirect effects of it very plainly conduced to fit them for those engagements; while it secured other important advantages to the family. At the time when four of his children were thus placed under their father's eye, to acquire the knowledge and practice of the arts, they were already imbued with a relish for literary and scientific pursuits; and conversation, which was freely allowed, was often of a kind to promote these tastes, and to keep intellect in activity. During a part of the day some one of the pupils who were under Mr. Taylor's care read aloud; so that the double object was almost constantly pursued—of acquiring the means of independence, and of carrying on intellectual cultivation; nor, at any time did the pressing engagements connected with the first object, wholly interrupt the pursuit of the second.

In this scene of united employment, and of mutual education, was formed that close and endeared family friendship, which was the source of their best enjoyments during the years that the sisters and brothers remained undivided at home; and which continued to be their solace after they were separated. Many passages occurring in the subjoined selection from her correspondence, evince

Digitized by Google

how fully and how warmly Jane participated in the pleasures of this home friendship. In truth her feelings of this kind were so strong as to form a leading feature of her character; and to require therefore distinct mention.

Lest her engagements with her father should produce a distaste or inaptness for domestic duties, Jane gave her assistance in the family, alternately with her sister: and her mother's solicitude that she should be thoroughly conversant with these employments, was not disappointed; for not even the excitement of her subsequent literary pursuits, ever impaired the domestic tastes and habits she acquired under her mother's care. Jane — far from being the mere literary lady, averse to household concerns, — was not only happy to be occupied with them; but became really a proficient in employments of this sort.

My sister's taste for the arts was such as to make her excel in the lighter branches; and many of her drawings, still in possession of her family, display a true feeling of the beautiful in nature, and a peculiar niceness and elegance of execution: but the business of engraving was not altogether suited to her talent, or taste, and it was relinquished without regret, when other paths of exertion opened before her. In a letter of an early date, she says—"The more I see of myself, and of the performances of others, the more I am convinced that nature never intended me

Digitized by Google

for an artist: * * * no one can tell how my feelings are excruciated, when I am referred to, or my opinion asked, as an *artist*.—I look at the girls in the milliners' shops, with envy; because their business and their genius are on a level. I think it is what I shall come to at last."

All the intervals of time between the stated hours of employment in engraving, were carefully husbanded. Early rising was the custom of the family; and the morning and evening hours, during the winter, were employed, either in literary pursuits, or in the maintenance of friendly correspondences;—so that as few moments as can be imagined were lost from the day.

In mentioning family arrangements, and in detailing the lesser circumstances which gave their coloring to my sister's mind, or which may be necessary to be understood, to explain the allusions occurring in her correspondence, it is almost impossible to avoid what I would fain avoid—giving the history of a family along with that of one of its members. In this difficulty I can only throw myself upon the candor of that class of readers whom I would most wish to please—I mean those who, feeling an interest in these minor incidents and descriptions, will not be disposed to impute an absurd egotism to the writer, who must either enter into such particulars, or confine himself to a narrative, too meagre to be either interesting or instructive.

Our pleasures were always of a social kind:—

Digitized by Google

at intervals, during the winter months, we were accustomed to spend the whole evening together, while my mother read aloud; and each was occupied with some lighter work of the pencil. Simple and easily procured as were these pleasures, they have been remembered with more delight than, perhaps, often follows the most exciting amusements.

In a letter to her earliest friend, Jane W., my sister says—"We continue to pursue our employments with regularity:—seldom or never encroaching on the usual hours. And though we sometimes wish our confinement was less; I believe we enjoy a greater proportion of real happiness than many who live a life of apparent ease and pleasure. We find it is employment that gives recreation its greatest charm; and we enjoy, with a double relish, little pleasures which, to those who are already fatigued with doing nothing, appear tiresome, or uninteresting. When I see people perpetually tormented with *ennui*—satiated with amusements—indifferent to every object of interest, I indeed congratulate myself that I have not one spare moment, in which these demons can assail me. You, my dear Jane, know the pleasures of industry; and you know that it is essential to our real happiness."

To another friend she writes—"I feel with you the approach of winter; and though I have not to apprehend from it the distressing effects which you experience, yet the loss of our delight-

Digitized by Google

ful evening walks—the desolated garden—the decaying vegetation—the shortening days—all tend rather to depress than to enliven. Yet I have much to love in winter: and I can truly say, I enjoy the hours of quiet industry it always introduces. Ann and I often remark to each other that, whatever agreeable recreations we may occasionally indulge in, and much as we really enjoy them, we are never so happy as when steadily engaged in the room where we engrave: that is our paradise:—you may smile at the comparison; and we know the inconveniences connected with our engagements there; but use reconciles us to them; and experience teaches us that comfort and happiness are compatible with these apparent inconveniences:—we have every inducement to industry; and we are thankful that that which is necessary, is also agreeable to us. We want nothing but a little more society;—one congenial family within our reach would be a treasure: for though we do love each other, and enjoy each other's society greatly; yet there are times when we long to recreate our wearied spirits with an intelligent friend."

During the summer our family parties were carried to some little distance in the country; and indeed, whenever weather permitted, the sisters and their brothers walked together. Jane records in many of her letters the happiness she tasted in these summer evening rambles. They served not merely the purpose of recruiting health and

Digitized by Google

spirits; but tended greatly to cement the friendship to which the brothers, especially, have thought themselves indebted for the most important advantages. At the same time a taste for the beauties of nature was roused and cherished, by the interchanged expression of delight in these ever-new sources of enjoyment. The superstitions of the heart were respected among us; and birth days were generally given up to social pleasures. Our family, at this time, was much secluded from extraneous society. The circle of my sister's early friends had been broken up, by the death of several of those who formed it, and the removal of others; and an interval of three or four years elapsed, before those friendships were formed of which the letters soon to be introduced were the fruits. During this interval, the family learned to look, almost entirely, within itself for its pleasures. This, while it tended, as has been mentioned, to cherish family affection, must be confessed to have produced a rather exclusive feeling, which was afterwards not easily broken up; and when, subsequently, distant friendships were formed, that were in the highest degree gratifying and exciting, an unfavorable feeling towards less congenial society nearer home, was perhaps increased. In Jane's mind this seclusive feeling was augmented by an extreme diffidence, and by a thousand nice sensibilities, which neither a wider intercourse with the world, nor the measure of public favor she obtained, ever entirely

Digitized by Google

conquered. To the last, she would always gladly retreat from general society to the bosom of her family; or to the circle of those friends whom she intimately knew and loved. Yet, whatever feelings of reserve might belong to my sister's character, I think it will not be said by any who knew her, that her behavior ever indicated intellectual arrogance, or supercilious indifference towards persons whose worth might want the embellishments of education. Her distaste for vulgarity of sentiment and manners was strong; but *virtue* never suffered in her esteem from the mere deficiency of mental adornments. In explaining her conduct, on some particular occasion, in a letter to her mother, she says—"At any rate, my dear mother, do not accuse me of a vanity and arrogance which I, from my very heart, disclaim. If, in comparison with some of my friends, others of them may appear less pleasing, or less intelligent, believe me, whenever I compare any with myself, the result is always humiliating. And perhaps nothing is less likely to raise any one highly in my esteem than their 'writing at the rate I do:'—my dear mother, do me the justice to believe that, at whatever crevice my vanity may endeavor to peep out, it will ever fly from the literary corner of my character. I am not indifferent to the opinion of any one; though I never expect to acquire that sort of philosophic serenity which shall enable me to regard the whole

Digitized by Google

circle of my acquaintance with the same glow of affection, or smile of complacency."

Whenever the health or the interests of those dear to her were at stake, the vigor of Jane's mind was roused;—her diffidence, her reserve, disappeared; and she exhibited not only disinterestedness, but a high degree of spirit and courage. In times of family affliction, the keenness of her sympathy made her actually a sufferer with those who suffered; especially if life seemed threatened, she endured the tortures of tender apprehension, in a degree that always impaired her own health. These dispositions were exercised during the autumn of the year 1801. At that time the scarlet fever prevailed very generally; and was, in many instances, fatal. It entered our family, Jane's elder sister, and three of her brothers being affected by it. Decimus, the youngest of them, then about six years old, received the infection at school, and after less than a week's illness became its victim.

CHAPTER IV.

NEW FRIENDSHIPS, AND LITERARY ENGAGEMENTS.

In the spring of the following year Jane visited London, for the first time since her childhood. It was during this visit that were commenced those

Digitized by Google

lasting and inestimable friendships from which she derived, through the remainder of her life, so much of the highest enjoyment; and to which she was wont to attribute the happiest influence upon her character. This visit was, in a manner, the commencement of a new era both to her heart and understanding: she was then in her nineteenth year, and was prepared by sensibilities of the liveliest kind, as well as by the long privation of social pleasures, except those found at home, to enjoy to the full, an introduction to a new circle. In this circle, I may venture to say, was found a very rare assemblage of excellence, in virtue, refinement, and intelligence. Most of the young friends with whom she had hitherto been connected were well educated, and intelligent; but among her new friends were some distinguished in their circle—and who would have been distinguished in any circle, by brilliant qualities of mind: they were, moreover, decided in their religious principles; and for the most part, influenced by a spirit of serious piety. Among them, the alternation from literary to religious conversation was not felt to be difficult, or chargeable with incongruity Instead of seeing, as she had before too often seen, piety and intelligence disjoined, she now saw them so united as to give attractiveness to the former, and true elevation to the latter.

She did not take her place among her new friends as an aspirant to literary distinction. Her talent had not yet been so called forth as to

Digitized by Google

be felt by herself, or much known by others. She failed not, however, strongly to interest those to whom she was now introduced, or to make subsequent intercourse fully as much desired on the one part as on the other. Friendships, formed at the very age of romance, are very commonly broken up when the illusions on which they were founded are dissipated: but the friendships formed at this time by my sister, were dissolved only by death.

Although the timidity of her disposition rendered her peculiarly averse to competition of every kind, yet Jane could not but feel, indirectly, the stimulating influence of the friendships she now enjoyed; for they were precisely of the sort most likely to rouse her powers, and to render the exercise of them a means of winning pleasures which she ever valued more highly than any gratification of literary vanity. I think I may affirm that a very principal incentive, or perhaps the principal incentive, to her poetical efforts — at least till the hope of doing good came in place of it, was the desire of enhancing the regard of the few friends whom she loved. A sentiment of this kind so frequently occurs in the course of her correspondence, that it cannot be doubted to have been a leading motive with her. Nor, indeed, did it seem in any degree impaired, after she had been exposed to excitements which too often injure the better feelings of the heart. To be loved, was to her a pleasure of incalculably

Digitized by Google

higher price than to be admired. She first wrote to cherish the affection of her friends; and when, afterwards, she felt the obligation of a more serious motive—that of making a faithful employment of the talent committed to her; still that first feeling, being most congenial to her character, continued to yield her the sweetest reward of her labors.

Rarely does it happen that a sphere of peculiar usefulness is chosen, and entered upon by the deliberate determination of the agent. For the Author of all good, in the more usual order of his procedure, not only chooses who shall serve him, but leads those whom he calls into his service in a path of which, when they enter upon it, they know not the direction. Ambitious minds, it is true, often devise schemes big with importance, which they imagine themselves destined to execute. But how seldom are such enterprises borne onward by the prosperous breath of heaven!

Certainly it was with no ambitious intention, nor even with the expectation of ever being heard of as authors beyond the circle of their friends, that Jane and her sister first wrote for the press. The circumstances which led them to do so were, in themselves, trivial; nor were they quick to attach any great importance to this new occupation. Jane wrote because she was accustomed, in every thing, to be her sister's companion and partner. She could not soon admit the idea that she was responsible for the exercise

Digitized by Google

of a peculiar talent. This impression did, however, at length, gain its proper influence; and throughout the latter years of her life she was under a powerful sense of duty in this respect. I know it was her constant practice, whenever she took up the pen to write for the press, to implore guidance and assistance from Him, from whom "every good and every perfect gift descends." Yet she could never receive the comfort of believing that she had done well in the charge committed to her; for both constitutional diffidence and christian humility, inclined her to renounce every assumption of merit.

The first piece of Jane's which appeared in print was a contribution to the Minor's Pocket Book, for the year 1804. It is inserted among the Poetical Remains. The pathos, simplicity, and sprightliness of "The Beggar Boy," even though the verse is fettered by the necessity of introducing a list of incongruous words, attracted much more attention than is often the lot of productions appearing in so humble a walk of literature. Her sister had contributed to the same publication for several preceding years, and had gained not less attention. The authors of these pieces became the subjects of inquiry; and it was not doubted by those who were competent to calculate the probable success of literary enterprises, that a volume of pieces, exhibiting the same vivacity, truth of description, good taste, and sound sentiment, would gain public favor.

Digitized by Google

Their father viewed with pleasure the new engagements of his daughters, and yet with some anxiety, for he was strongly averse to the idea of their becoming authors by profession. He therefore favored their literary occupations so far as they might consist with the predominance of those pursuits, which he considered to be much more safe and certain, as the means of independence. Nor did their mother (who *then* would have thought any thing as probable as that she herself should become known as a writer) look with less watchfulness upon the effect of these new and exciting engagements. They were therefore carried on under just so much of restriction as prevented their engrossing too much of thought and of time. Almost every thing written by my sisters for some years after they had first published, was composed, either before the regular occupations of the day commenced, or after they were concluded. It was for the most part, after several hours of assiduous application, that the pieces contained in the volumes of Original Poems, Rhymes for the Nursery, &c. were written: nor was it, I believe, till a much later period, that ever an entire day was indulged to the labors of the pen.

Under restrictions such as these many of the most useful, and some, even of the most admired literary works have been produced. It is true that to those who are thus at once urged and impeded on the course of intellectual labor, such circum-

Digitized by Google

stances seem altogether unfavorable; and they are fain to imagine that, if freed from the fetter, and exempted from the goad, genius would make a wider circuit, and bring home richer treasures. But this supposition is not often well founded: for so great is the *vis inertiæ* of mind, so vague its spontaneous efforts, and so much higher and more painful is the effort necessary for useful production, than that of which most minds are at all capable, when free from urgent motives, that, perhaps, these seemingly unfavorable circumstances ought to be welcomed as the stimulus necessary to put the mind in full activity. It must, however, be granted that there are regions of thought into which those minds only can rise which neither require the stimulus of secondary motives, nor can submit to be so embarrassed.

The little volume of "Original Poems for Infant Minds, by several young Persons," was found to be highly agreeable to children, and so useful in the business of early education, that, in a very short time, it obtained an extensive circulation: it was quickly reprinted in America; and translated into the German and Dutch languages. What share of this success belongs to each of the contributors to the volume, could not be ascertained, even if to make the inquiry were of any importance. Jane, for her part, was ever forward to surrender all praise to others.

The success of this volume presently suggested the production of a second, of a similar kind,

Digitized by Google

and the young writers, gratified by the unexpected favor they had won, readily listened to the wishes of parents and children. Although children will not be long entertained, or effectively instructed by mere dulness; yet it is true that, even the more intelligent of them, may be entertained, and to a certain extent, instructed, by what is very trivial, or very much deformed by faults of style. But it is happy when the power of pleasing children, and of strongly engaging their attention, is so united with good taste and delicate tact in the choice of embellishments, and correct judgment, and sound principle in all that bears upon morals, as to give to such productions those negative merits that, in the work of education, are of higher importance than, perhaps, any other excellences. For, to furnish reading, without vulgarising the taste, or contaminating the imagination, or enfeebling the judgment, or perverting the feelings, is high praise in those who write for youth.

A part of my sister's contributions to some of these little works, was composed under rather peculiar circumstances, which must here be briefly narrated; because they served to mature her character, and to exhibit its solid excellences in a somewhat new and difficult situation.

During the autumn and winter of the year 1803, the alarm of a French invasion (and it has since appeared to have been a well-founded alarm) prevailed through the country, and espe-

Digitized by Google

cially along the eastern and southern coasts. Colchester was at that time a principal military station: the active movements therefore of a large body of troops, always in a state of readiness to meet the expected enemy, tended of itself to keep alive a constant impression of the impending danger: besides this, the military persons high in command on the station, were not backward in exciting the popular fears. Every day, some whispered intimation of immediate danger from "the best authority," was circulated through the town, till a strong and general persuasion prevailed that it might, very probably, become the scene of the first conflict with the invaders. In this state of public feeling, not a few of those of the inhabitants whose means allowed them to do so, either left the town for a time; or made such arrangements as should enable them to leave it at an hour's notice.

At this time the house which, as has been mentioned, Mr. Taylor owned at Lavenham, was without a tenant: this circumstance seemed to invite the step which the fears of the time suggested—that of removing a part of the family thither, where a home would be always in readiness for those who remained, should it be needed. No material difficulty prevented the execution of this plan, and it was determined that Jane, with two of her brothers, and an infant sister, should remove to the vacant house. This separation of the family took place in the middle of October.

Digitized by Google

So great was the confidence placed by her parents in Jane's discretion and ability, that they committed this divided portion of their family to her care without anxiety; nor do I think that, in any instance, their confidence was abused or disappointed. Jane, though gifted with uncommon vivacity of spirit, was thoughtful and provident in a degree rarely found at her age. I can perfectly remember her active, laborious, and well-concerted management of our little affairs. Such was her industry, that the new cares of a family were suffered but in a small degree to infringe upon the customary hours devoted to engraving; nor these upon her literary engagements; for her winter evenings were assiduously occupied in composing her share of some little works which soon after appeared.

The house stood in one of the least frequented parts of the town—the garden abutting upon a common: and being only in part occupied, and scantily furnished, the aspect of things within, as well as without, was very much in harmony with the feelings of terror under which we had sought this asylum. Jane exhibited, on this occasion, the strength of her mind: she was peculiarly subject to impressions of fear, both from real and imaginary dangers; but such was her resolution, and so great was the strength of principle, that, without wishing to retreat from her situation, she endured (what those who have more physical courage never endure) the terrors of a suscepti-

Digitized by Google

ble, and strongly excited imagination. This is indeed the courage of woman: and it may be questioned whether, in the possession and exercise of this high quality, the weaker sex does not often surpass the stronger.

Yet our banishment was not without its enjoyments; for Jane, who had a genuine domestic taste, soon gave an air of comfort to the part of the house we occupied; and we received, during our stay, the kindest attentions from several families with which ours had been on terms of intimacy while resident at Lavenham. I may here insert a few extracts from letters written by my sister at this time. To her friend Jane W. she writes —"I believe Mrs. W. has received from Ann a full account of our late flight to Lavenham, where, after the first alarm had subsided, we found a very pleasant and comfortable asylum, for some months. Though we felt it a little mortifying, that our neighbor Bonaparte should have it in his power to give us such a thorough panic, and so completely to derange all our affairs, yet, I own, I enjoyed my residence in the old spot exceedingly. Being in our own house, and for so long a time, I began to fancy myself once more an inhabitant; and it was not without pain that I took leave of a place that will ever be dear to me. During our stay at Lavenham, I took some delightful walks:—perhaps you have by this time forgotten most of them. I found it highly interesting once more to tread the oft-trod path;

Digitized by Google

and to recognise many a spot that had been the scene of former enjoyments. 'I know not whether to you it is so; but with me, no local attachments are so strong as those formed in childhood." * * *

"Lavenham, Oct. 15, 1803.

My Dear Mother,

"We have safely received your parcels and letters; which were very acceptable to us. I am now quite comfortably settled in my new house; and feel as if I had taken up my station here for a constancy. I manage capitally, as you may suppose; and 'give satisfaction.' I rise (I am sorry I cannot use the plural number) between six and seven, and get every thing in order before breakfast; but with all my endeavors I cannot begin engraving before eleven; to which I sit down again half an hour after dinner. We keep school very regularly; and Jemima comes on, both in reading and work. As to economy, I study it as much as possible; and for our employments—they are certainly broken in upon at present; but will be less and less so, as we get more settled. We have not indulged in one walk yet; though the country and weather have been beautifully inviting: but we sit at the bow window next the garden; and quite enjoy ourselves."

From a letter of a later date, a few sentences may be extracted:—"I write this in hopes of your having it in time for the carrier, that you may know what things I most want. Of news I have

Digitized by Google

none; and should not have written now, but for the reason above mentioned. Thank you for the carpet; it is quite a luxury to us. Although we brought every thing absolutely necessary, we have few conveniences; and though, if we were all huddled together in a barn, expecting the French to overtake us every instant, we might be very well contented with—

> 'An open broken elbow chair;
> A candle cup without an ear;' &c.

Yet, living quietly, like our neighbors, we rather miss the conveniences we have been used to. I must confess we did not *fast* on the fast day; we went however in the morning to the prayer-meeting, where we heard an excellent prayer from Mr. ——— of three-quarters of an hour:—its length spoiled it; for we were all ready to faint. In the afternoon we walked with the children. I thank you and father for what you say about walking; but really we seem very little to need more exercise than we have in the house and garden, where the children play continually. If we take a walk once or twice a week, just to look at the old places, and show the children the new ones, it is quite sufficient."

Towards the close of her stay at Lavenham, Jane writes to her mother—"Could you see us just now, I cannot tell whether you would most laugh at, or pity us. I am sitting in the middle of the room, surrounded with beds, chairs, tables, boxes, &c. &c.; and every room is the same.

Digitized by Google

But our brains are in still greater confusion—not knowing now what to do. Have you heard this new alarm? It is said the French are actually embarking. Mr. ——— strongly advises us not to move till we hear something more; so we are quite perplexed. We have at length resolved to wait, at all events, till Saturday, and if you write by return of post, we shall be able to act then according to your wishes; but in the meantime, we shall be in a most delightful plight, for most of the things are packed up, ready to go to-morrow; and then, if after all, we must stay, it will be vexatious enough. If you find there is no foundation for the alarm, you will of course, order us home directly. But do not fail to write, for we are quite deplorable.

"And now, having despatched all my business, let me thank my dear mother for her wholesome reprimand, which I hope will be a lesson for the future. I feel no inclination to apologize for myself; but acknowledge, upon reflection, I was wrong—when I wrote I did not reflect. Yet this I can say, that whatever opinion I may have formed of Mr. ——, I have never been otherwise than polite to him. What I said to L. was unpremeditated; and believe, if I had thought it probable that she would ever have met him, I should not have said what I did; further I declare, I do not despise the gentleman, and I wrote only for my amusement, though it should not have been at another person's expense."

Digitized by Google

The alarm of invasion scarcely subsided till the spring of the following year. But at the earliest appearance of returning security, Mr. Taylor gladly recalled his family to their home; and in the month of February we were once more united under his roof.

CHAPTER V.

EXTRACTS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

About this time commenced that series of deaths among her earlier young friends, to which frequent allusion is made in Jane's letters. The death of the four lovely sisters, of whom mention has already been made, was succeeded by that of several other endeared companions. But while early intimacies were thus dissolved, the more important and more lasting friendships that had now been formed, were strengthened, and became every year the sources of more pleasure and advantage. The summer months were always enlivened by visits from some of our young friends; and the records which I find, among my sister's papers, of these social enjoyments, show that she derived from them both the liveliest delight, and the most important benefits. The interruption occasioned by these visits to ordinary occupation, was not much greater than was need-

Digitized by Google

ed to recruit the spirits, and to prepare the mind for the unremitting application of the winter months; for as soon as evening walks were no longer practicable, the labors of the pen were eagerly resumed; and, till the returning summer, rarely suspended.

Her letters to her young friends will best exhibit her feelings, and describe her employments at this period.

TO MISS S. L. C.

Colchester, December 20, 1805.

My dear L.

If four or five years ago you had suffered so long a chasm to be made in our correspondence, I should doubtless have indulged in some such painful soliloquy as you have prepared for me; or perhaps in a yet more touching and plaintive strain. But now, enjoying all the sober rationality of mature age—now, having happily past that wild and fanciful season, by some denominated the "*silly age*"— or, at least, being a degree or two more rational than I was then, I feel far more disposed to attribute the long intervals to which every correspondence is liable, to some of those thousand nameless hindrances which every day presents, and to that inconvenient spirit of procrastination of which most of us more or less partake, than to declining affection, to fickleness, or to affront. Perhaps it may have occurred to you in the course of this long period, which I fear has nearly put you out of breath, that I have been

Digitized by Google

speaking one word for you, and two for myself:—it would be very unfair for you to suppose so; but even should your supposition be just, you will allow that to afford another person one-third of a good thing, that might have been all one's own, is no mean proportion. But now it will be making a poor return for all this generosity, if you should become more than ever remiss in your communications; and then make yourself easy by thinking that Jane will only impute it to "some nameless hindrance, or an inconvenient spirit of procrastination."

But now for your grave and appropriate question, namely—"What do you think of this famous victory?" To which, after due consideration, I reply—Why pray what do *you* think of it? for I make little doubt that we have thought much alike on the subject. Should you however question this, and suppose that my humbler ideas have not stretched to the same height as yours, I will convince you of the contrary, by endeavoring to recall some of the reflections that were inspired by this "famous victory." And first, I thought that—it was a very "famous victory;" did not you?—and besides this, and much more, I thought a great many things that the newspapers had very obligingly thought, ready for me. Well, but to speak in a graver strain; and if you are disposed to hear what I have really thought about our late glorious victories;—why, read on:—

Now, impressed with the idea that my private

Digitized by Google

opinion could in no way affect the public weal, I have allowed myself to form one, without restraint; well knowing that I might vainly endeavor to pluck one leaf from the hero's laurel, even if I were disposed to do so, which I assure you I am not. For every one who performs his part with zeal and success, claims respect:—and who can deny that Nelson has nobly performed his? But tell me, is the character of the warrior in itself to be admired? or rather can it be loved? From what motives does a man at first devote himself to the trade of war? Do you not think it is more often from a desire of glory, than from patriotism? And now, though I have often endeavored to discover what there is either amiable or generous in the love of *glory*, I have never yet been able to discern it. I cannot tell how or why it is a less selfish principle than the love of riches. Is not he in reality the truest patriot who fills up his station in private life well—he who loves and promotes peace, both in public and private, who knowing that his country's prosperity depends much more on its *virtue* than its arms, resolves that his individual endeavors shall not be wanting to promote this desirable end? And is not he the greatest hero who is able to despise public honors for the sake of private usefulness—he who has learned to subdue his own inclinations, to deny himself every gratification inconsistent with virtue and piety, who has conquered his passions, and subdued his own spirit? surely

Digitized by Google

he is "greater than he that taketh a city," or a squadron. If the great men of the earth did but act on these principles, our heroes would be sadly at a loss for want of employment; I fear they would be obliged to turn to making ploughshares and pruninghooks.

Now, perhaps, you will call me an ungrateful creature; but really I think I am not so. Though, certainly, I have not joined without some secret misgivings of heart in the unqualified plaudits that have sounded from all quarters. If so many brave men *must* be sacrificed, I heartily rejoice that the dearbought victory was ours. But how is it possible, while we regard them not merely as the machines of war, but as immortal beings, to rejoice without sorrow and dismay in the result of the rencontre? * * *

TO THE SAME

Colchester, February 12, 1806

* * * In truth Jane Taylor of the morning, and Jane Taylor of the evening, are as different people, in their feelings and sentiments, as two such *intimate* friends can possibly be. The former is an active handy little body, who can make beds or do plain work, and now and then takes a fancy for drawing, &c. But the last mentioned lady never troubles her head with these menial affairs; —nothing will suit her but the *pen;* and though she does nothing very extraordinary in this way, yet she so far surpasses the first-named gentlewoman,

Digitized by Google

that any one who had ever received a letter from both, would immediately distinguish between the two, by the difference of the style. But to drop this ingenious allegory, I assure you it represents the truth, and I am pretty well determined not again to attempt letter-writing before breakfast. For really I am a mere machine—the most stupid and dronish creature you can imagine, at this time. The unsentimental realities of breakfast may claim some merit in restoring my mental faculties; but its effects are far surpassed by the evening's tea:—after that comfortable, social, invigorating meal, I am myself, and begin to think the world a pleasanter place, and my friends more agreeable people, and (entre nous) myself a much more respectable personage, than they have seemed during the day; so that by eight o'clock, I am just worked up to a proper state of mind for writing. If you are liable to these changing frames, you will not only excuse and feel for me, but heartily acquiesce in my resolution of now putting down the pen till the *evening*.

It is now indeed, evening, and several days have passed since I wrote the foregoing; and I do assure you that nothing but the fear of being unable to fill another sheet in time for my father's departure, should prevail with me to send you so much nonsense. I often reproach myself for writing such trifling letters; but it is so *easy* to trifle, and so hard to write what may be worth reading, that it is a sad temptation not to attempt it. * * *

Digitized by Google

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, May 8, 1806

My dear L.

I have just been taking a solitary turn round our pretty garden, on this most lovely evening; and glad should I have been to have enjoyed it in company with my dear L. But as this was a fruitless wish, I thought I could do nothing better than return to my desk, and spend an hour with you in this way. Ann and a young friend who is come to stay with us while father and mother are absent, are going to enjoy this serene sky abroad; but I have determined to forbear that pleasure, for the sake of enjoying even this imperfect intercourse with you.

My dear L., much as I love London for the friends it contains, I think my delight in country scenery increases every year; and while I occasionally cast a wistful look towards places where I feel a *heart* interest—feeling as if imprisoned in this uncongenial spot, yet, when I contrast smoke, and noise, and darkness, with the smiling landscape, and the clear sky, and all the beauties of a country walk, which is here always within reach, I forget my privations of other kinds, and acknowledge that "the lines are fallen to me in pleasant places." I doubt not that, if I live, the time will come when I shall look back to our social evening walks here with rapture—or perhaps with agony! I am sure I shall never know happier days than these, though now indeed I am

Digitized by Google

not without my anxieties; but oh! how much deeper anxieties may I have to encounter! When I look without, and observe the portion of affliction which is distributed to others, and more especially when I look within, and see the mass of vanity and worldly-mindedness which perhaps can be dispelled only by affliction, I assure you I tremble; and while I look around on my many, many comforts—not, I hope, without an emotion of thankfulness,—I feel the wisdom of enjoying them *now:* one link broken in the dear family chain, and the happiness I now enjoy could, I think, never be entirely restored—and oh, how soon may it be snapped! What a wide field for anxiety and distress is a large family, to every member of which one's happiness seems to cling Yet we know they are but "short comforts borrowed now, to be repaid anon." In this light I would ever desire to regard them with a feeling of grateful pleasure as to the present, and of cheerful resignation for the future.

I feel much gratified, my dear L., by the many expressions of affection contained in your last letter, this is the sweetest music I can listen to. The voice of affection is distinct from that of flattery; and I hope the former will ever be more delightful to me than the latter. To merit the esteem of the few individuals whose esteem I believe myself to enjoy, is my constant wish, and almost my highest ambition. I do not know why I have said *almost*, for I knew nothing more de-

Digitized by Google

sirable—nothing which could make me more truly happy.

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, Sept. 24, 1808.

Good morning to you, my dear L. But if you are, as I conjecture, enjoying the last grateful slumber, believe me, I intend not to disturb you; though I own it seems a little hard that I should be employed so early (for it is only half-past seven,) for your amusement and instruction. And moreover, that I may have all the praise that belongs to me, permit me to assure you, that I have been up this hour, or more, and have done a great deal of business; while you, perhaps, have only been struggling with an obstinate dream, that at last has left you, with all its delusions, to awaken no wiser or happier than you were yesterday. If this has been your case, I heartily sympathize with you, for often has my evil genius thus tormented me; though, in truth, I have no great right to complain of him, since I must allow that, in my waking dreams, I have not unfrequently practised the same species of torture upon myself.

But to be serious, my dear L., I do believe that this habit of *castle-building* is very injurious to the mind. I know I have sometimes lived so much in a *castle*, as almost to forget that I lived in a *house;* and while I have been carefully arranging *aerial* matters *there*, have left all my solid business in disorder *here*. To be perpetually fancying what *might be*, makes us forget what we really

Digitized by Google

are; and while conjuring up what we might have we are negligent of what we really possess. You will perceive I am recollecting *youthful* follies—do not suppose, I beseech you, that I *now* indulge in these childish reveries. At *my age*, you know, I go soberly on, doing my proper business in its regular routine.—Will you believe that I ever suffer my thoughts to wander from the employment of my hands? If, for example, I am making tea—I think about the tea, the tea-pot, the water, the sugar, the cream, the bread, the butter, and the plate, all in regular succession; then of the company, when it is proper to make the customary inquiries—and think you, at any other times? In short, I am now a discreet personage, having left all the follies of sixteen far in the back-ground.

If you remembered Eliza S. in health, you were, I dare say, much shocked by the alteration. Poor L. is also on her journey; whether she will ever reach Exeter is doubtful; if she do, I fear she will survive her arrival a very short time. You are now witnessing the progress of this complaint in your cousin. Let us hear continually, when you write, how she is. E. and L. make six of our immediate friends whom we have attended in this disorder! besides many others not so near to us, who have gone in the same way. That I, who am certainly delicate, have stood so long, and under many disadvantages, is more than might have been expected; and I hope excites

Digitized by Google

thankfulness. I have for some time felt as if waiting for my turn. To hear only that one of my friends has a cough, alarms me now; and I look round upon them all with an anxious eye —which of them am I next to lose? * * *

TO MISS E. F.

Colchester, December 6, 1806.

* * And now will you allow me to call in question the accuracy and justice of some of your opinions, though formed, as you assure me, on the accumulated experience of "three score years and ten."—I will not accuse you of doing the world injustice, for even the peep I have had at it convinces me it is, as you say, "deceit and wickedness;" but surely there are *some* honest souls—some who are disinterested, open-hearted, and affectionate;—at least if it is not so—if those whom I have long thought it my greatest happiness to love, and whom my unbiassed judgment has taught me to respect and venerate—I ought rather to suspect and to fear—I do not wish to be undeceived; I would rather be imposed upon ever so often, than endure the torture of a constant state of suspicion and jealousy.—Yes, my dear E., you must not deprive me of the pleasure of believing I have a real share in your affections; you must still allow me to think of you as a *friend*, without indulging a fear that you will violate the sacred title. The best use, I think, that we can make of the many instances of dupli-

Digitized by Google

city and insincerity which every day brings before our view, is to learn thereby to suspect ourselves, —here, indeed, we cannot be too watchful, or too accurate in our examinations; but, alas! how much easier is it to decide upon the conduct and motives of others, than to weigh and analyze our own! and what abundant cause have we for deep humiliation, when we arrive at the springs of most of our best performances.

The result of such reflections as these I have found very satisfactory and decisive: I find that it is quite in vain to attempt to perform any action, to think any thought, or to cultivate any amiable sentiment aright, unless it be done with a view to the glory of God, and with a humble dependance on his supporting hand; this important truth every day brings with fresh conviction to my mind. I have long mourned over my temper, naturally irritable and impatient: I have read of, and I have witnessed examples of uniform sweetness and meekness of temper, which have at once made me blush at my own deficiencies, and stimulated me to those exertions which others have successfully made in conquering their evil propensities; I have therefore resolved to make a noble stand against the risings of my temper, whatever provocations might occur:—but, alas! how feeble were these resolutions!—perhaps they yielded to the very first attack, and the work was all to be done anew. What then

Digitized by Google

was to be done: must I give all over; and suffer my ungoverned temper to prevail? No;—but I must first seek assistance from one whose "strength is made perfect in our weakness," who is as able to still the storms of passion, as to say to the raging waves, "Peace, be still:"—I must not hope to be able to resist the temptations to anger or fretfulness of one short day, if I have not in the morning of that day, prayed to be enabled to overcome evil. One had better forget to say, "Give us this day our daily bread," than to put up the fervent petition, "Lead me not into temptation."

But this is not all:—He who searches the heart will not afford me strength to overcome my temper, unless he sees a right motive urging me to attempt it: if I wish to be amiable for the same reason that I might wish to be accomplished, or beautiful; that is, that I may be admired, or beloved, or respected; can I hope for success? Oh no:—if I be not actuated by a humble desire to obey the commands of God, to follow the bright example of Jesus Christ, by a hatred of all that is sinful, and an ardent desire to be "holy as he is holy," I must still strive and pray in vain. How does this increase the difficulty of the work, and show the absolute necessity of divine assistance! not that I think a modest wish to please can be sinful; indeed, without it, how can we ever expect to please; but this must

Digitized by Google

not be the grand spring of action, unless we would prefer the approbation of our fellow creatures to the favor of God. * * *

TO MISS S. L. C.

Colchester, October 12, 1807.

* * * In the conversation we had together at Nayland, you may remember we lamented the trifling style into which we too often fall in our correspondence. It is undoubtedly a real evil, though a very common one: as in conversation, so in writing, it is easier to *chat* than to converse: it is easier to be *witty* than *wise*. One can fill all sides of a sheet without stopping a moment, in such a way that one is quite ashamed to peruse it when done. If the mind is fatigued or in an uncomfortable frame, what a labor it is to *think!* and at such a time one is under a strong temptation to give the pen a full license—curbing it neither by reason nor conscience; and what a range will it take when thus left to itself! But my dear L., is not this making that useless, or at best a mere diversion, which might be highly beneficial? And is not a similar fault often chargeable upon personal intercourse? So seldom as we meet, and so short as are our interviews, what a pity that they should be trifled away! Whenever we have had a friend with us, I sigh to think that so few of the hours in which we have had their company have been occupied by any thing like im-

Digitized by Google

proving conversation. For our own parts, I think the fault may, in great measure, be traced to our taste for *drollery*. I have frequently regarded this propensity as a misfortune: especially as it is so rarely overcome. I am sure, my dear L. you have seen enough of it, and of its consequences, to make you think very much as I do on this subject. Does not a jest frequently put a stop to an interesting conversation, or dissipate a train of useful reflections! And do not droll turns of expression, or humorous associations, occasionally interfere even with our most serious engagements? Have not these ideas frequently occurred to you? But to what does all this tend? Why I hope to an endeavor towards reformation: —at any rate I will try this time to write a letter without trifling.

In your last letter you just introduced the subject which ought to be more interesting to us than any other. It is strange indeed that those who are united in the bonds of friendship—as I hope, my dear L. we are, and ever shall be—and who profess to be journeying together on the same pilgrimage, towards the same happy home, should so rarely exchange a word relative to the difficulties and dangers of the way, and to the hope of future rest. It is strange; yet it is what we see every day. That unfortunate reserve which closes the lips of so many people on the subject of religion—Whence does it proceed? What

Digitized by Google

other subject is there, however delicate, but what is sometimes introduced? But here our lips are sealed. I believe we do ourselves a great injury by indulging this temper. For my own part, though I believe few people feel this reluctance more powerfully than I have done, it has not been the cause of my silence so often as the discouraging or uncomfortable state of my mind. Oh could we but *feel* as much as we *know* of the importance and excellency of religion—could we but retain a just impression of the vanity of even the most important of our earthly pursuits, how different would be our manners and our conduct! But seeing things, as we do, only through the medium of our beclouded senses, every object is distorted or reversed.

I have lately been reading Dr. Watts's discourses on the happiness of separate spirits; it is impossible to peruse them without feeling an elevation of mind, above the trifles of earth—without being inspired by the desire "to see and taste the bliss:"—but, oh, how soon is the mind sensualized again—even before one fleeting hour is passed! How does the world flow in upon it again, after it has been for awhile abstracted!

* * * *

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

LITERARY ENGAGEMENTS AND RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

Jane was at this time employed, conjointly with her sister, upon some little works to which their names have not since been attached. To this indeed they were always extremely reluctant; and yielded their names only when it was no longer within their option to withhold them. It may be added, that, if publicity was not sought for by my sisters, neither were they incited by any prospects of considerable pecuniary advantage; for, with one or two exceptions, the authors' share of the profits arising from the sale of their works never amounted to a sum which, if they had been dependant upon their exertions in this line, could have afforded them a comfortable subsistence. I feel it to be due to my sister's memory—and not to her memory alone—thus explicitly to contradict a supposition entertained, I believe, by many persons, that the very extensive sale of their works has been the source of a large income to the authors.

In pecuniary matters, Jane was, at once, provident, exact, and liberal; but her tastes and habits made her utterly averse to the care of accumulating money. Her feelings in writing were dissociated from the idea of gain; and she would neither personally interfere to secure what she

Digitized by Google

might deem her rights, nor suffer her mind to be long disturbed by solicitudes of this sort. She received, with gratitude to the Giver of all good, whatever share she actually obtained in the products of her writings, and strove, as far as possible, to put away from her thoughts the disquieting recollection of what that share might have been. Often have I heard her break off a conversation on pecuniary matters, by an exclamation of this kind —"Ah well, it is God who determines what I am to have; and if I were to gain all that I might fairly gain, He would know how, in other ways, to reduce the amount to the exact sum at which he sees best to fix my income."

The success of her first attempt to write for the press, administered no more stimulus to my sister's mind, than her diffidence needed. Still she considered herself as merely filling up a subordinate part; and it was with no feigned humility that, in addressing her sister, she says—

"My Ann, you had taken the lyre,
And I, from the pattern you set,
Attempted the art to acquire;
And often we play a duet.
But those who, in grateful return,
Have said they were pleased with the lay,
The discord could always discern;
And yet I continued to play.

The second volume of Original Poems met with as much favor as the first;—both volumes

Digitized by Google

were soon reprinted in America; and have to the present time, continued there, as well as in England, to be very generally used in the nursery.

From the period of which I am now speaking, the history of my sister's mind will best be given by herself, in the extracts from her Correspondence; the part, therefore, of her biographer, will chiefly be to furnish such connecting facts as may render the perusal of the selected letters intelligible and interesting. The sound good sense which has recommended the latter productions of her pen, began then to temper the sprightliness of her fancy; and the letters of each succeeding year will exhibit a very marked progression in this respect. For not only did her understanding ripen, but the false diffidence by which it had been shackled was gradually removed by the successful exercise of her talents. In some young persons self-confidence occasions a precocious developement of the reasoning powers; while in others, a morbid diffidence retards the expansion of them, and even protracts a certain jejuneness of style in writing, long after the substance of thought has become worthy of mature years. This was very much the case with Jane: —if earlier in life she had felt herself possessed of the powers she afterwards displayed, she might have moved in a wider and higher sphere. She continued to address herself to childhood, and youth, not merely because she thought that to be the work for which she was fitted; but in great

Digitized by Google

measure because, within this humble sphere, she felt herself safe; and that, while she moved not out of it, the dreaded charge of presumption could not well be brought against her. On many of the most important topics of religion, morals, and manners, she thought justly, and felt strongly; and seemed only to need the persuasion that she could gain the attention of adult readers, in order to do so with success. But though representations of this kind were often made to her, she could never be prevailed upon to make the attempt.

The little volume of "Rhymes for the Nursery" appeared not long after the two of Original Poems:—to this volume no one but my sisters contributed. Their aim was to present ideas and to awaken emotions in a form adapted to the earliest childhood. The question which the authors propose in their preface—"Whether ideas adapted to the comprehension of infancy admit the restrictions of rhyme and metre"—seems now to be pretty well determined in the affirmative; for it may be said to have been "carried by acclamation" from thousands of infant voices, that rhyme and metre are the friends of infancy; and that, far from being "restrictions" upon the communication of ideas, they open the avenues of intellect more readily than any other means. Experience proves that poetry itself, as distinguished from mere rhyme and metre, though not fully apprehended by the mind of a child, has truly a charm for it. Those who have been en-

Digitized by Google

gaged in the instruction of the children of the poor will grant it to be a fact, that if children of active minds are allowed to make their own selection of hymns to be committed to memory, they will, for the most part, choose rather such as have something of the spirit of poetry in them, than those which might seem the best adapted to their comprehension by being altogether prosaic in their style. The Rhymes for the Nursery, though in phraseology brought down to a lower level, are, many of them, more poetical in their character than the Original Poems; and it is believed that the success of the one has been, at least, fully equal to that of the other.

Jane's literary pursuits were facilitated about this time, and her comfort much increased, by the appropriation of a room to her exclusive use; which she fitted up to her own taste. This attic was secluded from the rest of the house;—the window commanded a view of the country, and a "tract of sky" as a field for that nightly soaring of the fancy of which she was so fond. Our parents always considered the exclusive occupation of a chamber or study, by each of their family, as a most important advantage, both for the cultivation of the mind, and the cherishing of devotional habits. So far as it was possible we were all favored in this respect; and Jane was always forward to avail herself of the privilege. Addressing a literary friend, she thus describes her study:—

Digitized by Google

"My verses have certainly one advantage to boast, beyond any that ever before escaped from my pen; — that of being composed in my own study. Whether instigated by the sight of your retired literarium, or what, I cannot exactly tell; but certain it is, that one of my first engagements on my return home, was to fit up an unoccupied attic, hitherto devoted only to household lumber: this I removed by the most spirited exertions, and supplied its place with all the apparatus necessary for a poet; which, you know, is not of a very extensive nature:—a few book-shelves, a table for my writing-desk, one chair for myself, and another for my muse, is a pretty accurate inventory of my furniture. But though my study cannot boast the elegance of yours, it possesses one advantage which, as a poet, you ought to allow surpasses them all—it commands a view of the country;—the only room in the house, except one, which is thus favored; and to me this is invaluable. You may now expect me to do wonders. But even if others should derive no advantages from this new arrangement, to me, I am sure they will be numerous. For years I have been longing for such a luxury; and never before had wit enough to think of this convenient place: it will add so much to the comfort of my life, that I can do nothing but congratulate myself upon the happy thought; and I demand a large share of your poetical sympathy on the occasion. Although it is morning, and, I must tell you, but little past six,

Digitized by Google

I have half filled this sheet, which capability I attribute, chiefly, to the sweet fields that are now smiling in vernal beauty before me."

There is reason to believe that the advantage of being able to fulfil, literally, the command "to enter into the closet, and shut the door," was not slighted; but that religious exercises were more regularly attended to by my sister, from this time; and that a consequent improvement in the state of her mind took place; though it still fell short of the peace and hope which become christian faith. Nevertheless the native soundness of her judgment showed itself when she was called to animadvert upon any morbid sentiments expressed by her young friends.—

TO MISS E. F.

Colchester, 1807.

* * * In your last you again introduce the subject of worldly amusements; and if I am not mistaken, this is neither the first nor the second time you have done so; and that in an argumentative style, as though our opinions were at variance. Now I really apprehend that we think as nearly alike on these points as one could reasonably wish; and I think if you were to examine some of my former letters, in which the subject has been discussed, you would find I acquiesce with you, at least in your most important objections. I cannot think what has given you the idea so strongly, that I am an advocate for the

Digitized by Google

pleasures of the theatre; unless it be, my having been persuaded, five years ago, to attend it one evening;—and though, certainly, I am not aware of having sustained any material injury, either to my moral or spiritual feelings, I have ever since decidedly resolved never to repeat the visit; and I hope you will believe me when I once again assure you that I do disapprove of such amusements; and should think it very dangerous, and exceedingly wrong to be in the habit of frequenting them. You mention novels:—you have read one or two here; and may conclude we are in the continual habit of perusing them. I believe in all my life I have read, and heard read, about a dozen—it may be twenty:—and though I think it injudicious to suffer very young girls to read even a good novel, if there be love in it, yet I must maintain the opinion that most, or many of those I have read were of a beneficial, and not of a hurtful tendency. I would as soon read some of Miss Edgeworth's or Miss Hamilton's novels, with a view to moral improvement, as Foster's Essays; and I have too high an opinion of your good sense and liberality, to suppose that, after a candid perusal of these, and some few other good novels (for the number of *good* ones I readily allow to be very small) you would repeat that, "to read them was incompatible with love to God." You oblige me to recur to a hackneyed argument, that the abuse of a thing should not set aside its use.

Digitized by Google

Do not say I am pleading for an indiscriminate indulgence in novel reading; or a *frequent* perusal of the very best of novels:—that, in common with every innocent recreation, may be easily carried to a hurtful excess: but you seem to me to fancy some fatal spell to attend the very name of *novel*, in a way that we should smile at, as narrow-minded and ignorant, in an uneducated person: all I wish you to admit—all I think myself is, that it is a possible thing for a book to be written, bearing the general form, appearance, and name of a *novel*, in the cause of virtue, morality, and religion;—and then, that to read such a book is by no means "incompatible with love to God," or in the least displeasing in his sight. I think you will not hesitate to admit this: and then we exactly agree in our opinions of "plays and novels." That plays, and bad novels, are "poisons which Satan frequently insinuates" with too great success, I have no more doubt of than yourself. Yet if I am not mistaken, he has some still more potent venoms;—if I might judge from myself, there are ways, in the most private life, in domestic scenes, in solitary retirements, by which Satan can as effectually operate on the heart, as in a crowded theatre. I believe I might read a hundred novels, and attend as many plays, and have my heart less drawn from God, than by those common pursuits and interests which, while it would be sinful to avoid them, I cannot engage in without sin. It is in the realities of life, and

Digitized by Google

not merely in the fictions that occasionally amuse us, that I find the most baneful poisons, the most effectual weaners from "love to God."

I think many people "strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel," in these very circumstances; and Satan willingly suffers them to abstain, with holy horror from the theatre, or to throw aside a novel with abhorrence—so that the idol, the real idol he has erected in their hearts, receive its daily worship. You cannot suppose I am bringing this forward by way of argument, for the one or the other; but it always appears to me that people begin at the wrong end, when they attack such errors as these. One might as well expect to demolish a building by pulling down some external ornament, while the pillars were left unmoved· and I think many who exclaim with vehemence against those who indulge in some of the vain pleasures of the world (for which probably themselves have no relish, and from which, therefore, it costs them little self-denial to abstain), would do well to examine if there be not some favorite idol within their own breasts, equally displeasing in the sight of a heart-searching God. I do not say this to you, dear E., I know you watch your heart, as well as your conduct, and earnestly desire to guard it in every quarter from the incursions of the wily adversary; and while you have abundant occasion to warn me of that worldly-mindedness which I desire daily to mourn over and to mortify, I hope your anxiety for me, "as

Digitized by Google

one who reads novels, and tolerates the frequenting of plays," will be abated, at least. I will discuss the subject with you as often as you please; but do not again employ your time in arguing me out of opinions which I ever discarded. * * *

A similar strain of good sense appears in the following passages.

"Those," she says in a letter to a friend, "who are in the habit of reading their own hearts, know that the heart may be as devotedly fixed on what is in itself a truly worthy and proper object of regard as on the sinful vanities of the world: and if that object be any thing but God, its intrinsic value diminishes nothing from the idolatry of the feeling. Perhaps I need not blush to enumerate those worldly pleasures on which my heart is most intent;—but I know I ought to blush, could I disclose the high, monopolizing place they hold there:—they reign;—when will these idols fall before the ark of God? Are they to be torn from their hiding-place as yours have been? O! why have I not had this trial rather than you?

"You have well described the difficulty, the exertion, requisite for real and fervent prayer. I am glad that I do know the difference between that, and the offering of lifeless petitions: you rightly affirmed that 'true prayer surpasses every other mental exercise, and is entirely be-

Digitized by Google

yond human attainment, without divine aid.' Certainly no one ever prayed who was not a Christian; but though sometimes I have found every faculty, for a few moments, intensely engaged in the exercise, how can I hope this was really prayer, when I remember the indifference the coldness, the reluctance that characterize the general state of my mind. Yet in the midst of the darkness that surrounds my own mind, I rejoice, my dear friend, in the light which shines upon yours."

How far this want of the comfort which religion should afford, might have been attributed to an obscured apprehension of "the hope set before us in the Gospel," is a question worthy of inquiry;—that it was not the consequence of cynical feelings or habits will be made apparent by a quotation from a letter addressed to a friend, whose mind was in some degree perverted by sentiments of that sort.

"In a certain sense, I may say with you, 'that my views of life are dark and melancholy:' yet I believe when you say so, you mean something more than I do. You do not permit yourself to receive the comforts and delights that are offered you by Providence, with 'a merry heart, giving God thanks.' Now I think that though, when compared with heavenly happiness, the best joys of earth should appear mean and trifling in our eyes; yet, considered in themselves, as they were given for our enjoyment, surely a cheerful and

Digitized by Google

grateful delight in them, must be even acceptable to our all-bountiful Father. When we survey all our comforts—a happy home, affectionate friends, easy circumstances, and the numerous train of common mercies, and social delights, ought we to call the prospect 'dark and melancholy?' Surely the cheerful song of praise befits us better than the sigh of discontent. Do not suppose I would plead for the gay amusements, and dangerous pleasures of the world. I am as firmly convinced of their evil tendency as you can be; and would avoid them as carefully. I am referring only to the natural comforts, and lawful enjoyments of life; and of these even I would say, that we must still 'hold them as if we held them not; and use them as not abusing them.'"

The same order of sentiment appears in a letter of consolation, addressed to this friend, soon afterward, on the death of a beloved brother. "Afflictions rightly improved, are indeed blessings; yet how apt are we to abuse them by receiving impressions very different from what they were intended to produce. I mention this from a fear, that notwithstanding your cheerful acquiescence in the Divine will, you do, in a degree, mistake the intentions of Providence. I hear your cough is become habitual, and that you firmly expect, and almost wish to join your dear brother very soon. Now I am persuaded it is not merely from a selfish motive that I would say, do not court death; but I am sure it is the language

Digitized by Google

of reason, and the voice of duty. It cannot be a wholesome state of mind, even in the midst of the severest trial, when it is looking to death as a relief. The holy desire 'to depart, and to be with Christ,' is very different from the desire to depart, that we may be with some dear friend, which can arise only from a worldly principle. In sending these sorrows, God usually intends to fit us for living more to his glory here below; and though they certainly contain a loud warning to 'prepare to meet our God,' as we know not how soon our turn may come, it is showing a degree of impatience under them to say—I cannot bear the separation, let *me* die also. Let me entreat you then, my dear E., to take great and constant care of your health; for vain is the attention of your friends, unless you join your own endeavors; especially restrain yourself from that ardent pursuit of whatever happens to engage your present interest, which, I am very sure has greatly undermined your health already, and which, if persisted in, will assuredly destroy it. May your soul also prosper. I shall rejoice to hear that you have been led by this affliction, more confidently than ever, 'to lay hold of the only hope set before us.'"

Unconsciously to herself, a real progression appears, from her letters, to have been taking place in Jane's religious feeling; if not more happy in hope, she was more established in principle. In a letter of an earlier date than the last, she says

Digitized by Google

—"Well, I hope I can say that I have different views of life, and a higher ambition than formerly. I dare not trust my treacherous heart a moment. But yet, upon examination, I think I may say, I should feel at least contented, to pass silently and soberly through the world, with a humble hope of reaching heaven at the end of my pilgrimage. I have many, many difficulties in my way; and when I compare the state of my mind with that which is required of those who follow Jesus, and see how much must be done ere I can attain it, I have no other comfort than this—'With God, all things are possible.' Yes, indeed, my dear E., we have each of us dangerous snares to avoid, and as you say, temptations to love the world. But I well know, and with shame I would allow it, that yours are far more inviting, and require more courage and self-denial to resist, than mine: yet you escape, and I become the victim. With half your graces and accomplishments, what should I have been! You mention talents;—but indeed you mistake in supposing that the accidental success that has attended my feeble efforts, has been very hurtful to me. I wish I had no worse enemies than my wits. I do not deny—it would be ungrateful to do so, that the approbation we have met with, and the applause, especially of some whose opinion was particularly precious, have been sources of constant satisfaction; and perhaps occasionally, my weak mind has been partly overset by them.

Digitized by Google

Yet I think I may say, my humiliations have generally counterbalanced such feeling, and kept my mind *in equilibrio*. No, though I own my muse has done me a few good turns, for which I shall always feel grateful; yet she has been the means of procuring me as many good, wholesome mortifications, as any personage, real or ideal, that I know of. I do not say all this to prove that I am not vain, for I am; if I were not, you know, I should not be liable to mortifications; nor have I yet thrown aside my pen in disgust, though I have many a time longed to do so."

Her letters about this time, when notoriety as an author was new to her, abound with similar sentiments. "We have been visiting some friends in the country, who correspond with the description you give of yours. They possess that natural intelligence, sound sense, and intrinsic excellence, which cannot fail to render them interesting, though deficient in cultivation, and unpolished in matters of taste. Now, among these friends, our poor superficial acquirements blaze away most splendidly. But though I am conscious of feeling elated at such times, yet it is checked by a humiliating sense of my real inferiority. I see them living in the daily exercise of virtues and graces to which I never approached. In all that is sound, sterling, durable—in all that a heart-searching God can approve, I see how far I fall short; and then, how contemptible and worthless is all in which I may have the advantage. Although

Digitized by Google

that degree of vanity which amounts to conceit, and obvious and obtrusive self-complacency, must, I think, be absolutely incompatible with dignity and refinement of mind, as well as with the christian graces; yet where is the heart, in which, in a state more or less subdued, it exists not?—and those who are wont to speak and to think meanly of themselves—who are willing to prefer others to themselves—and who are continually deploring their deficiencies, yet, after all, evince great ignorance of their own hearts, if they imagine that, beneath all this humiliation, no seeds of vanity lie concealed; in truth, they may spring up nowhere more luxuriantly than in the soil that is watered by the tears of self-condemnation. With respect to this baleful weed, it may with peculiar propriety be said—

> 'We cannot bear diviner fruit,
> Till grace refine the ground.'

Here is the only remedy—religion, and religion only, can humble the proud spirit to the dust."

Jane's intimate friends were not ignorant of the embarrassed state of her religious feelings; nor were they backward in affording to her the direction and encouragement she seemed to require. These offices of christian friendship were acknowledged by her with lively affection.

"With feelings of sincere gratitude and love, I would again thank you, my very dear A., for the tender concern you manifested on my behalf; and the readiness with which you afforded the

Digitized by Google

advice and encouragement I solicited. You are highly privileged, dear A., in having it in your power to promote pleasure and cheerfulness wherever you appear. Your visit was truly a season of sunshine; and how sweetly refreshing are such occasional gleams, breaking forth from a clouded sky—and such indeed is mine. I could bear the roughness of the road, if it were but bright overhead: however, I dare not turn back; and you, dear A., while going on your way rejoicing, will not, I am sure, be unmindful of your benighted friend. It may be long before we meet again; but my heart has been accustomed to love the absent, and my thoughts have been trained to fly towards every point of the compass: and whether at ——, or at ——, they will frequently attend you, laden with sincere affection."

In reply to a letter of religious consolation and advice, addressed, about this time, to Jane, by another friend, she says—"I have already thanked you for a letter received two months ago; but I have yet to assure you of what you seem to entertain a doubt—that the principal subject of it was very far from being uninteresting or unwelcome to me. I own indeed, I do feel a backwardness in introducing these topics; and that, as you say, greatly arising from a false shame, that ought not to be encouraged; but I have other impediments; and if I cannot speak with entire freedom on religious subjects, it is not indeed because I cannot 'confide in you;' but for want of confi-

Digitized by Google

dence in myself. I dread much more than total silence, falling into a common-place, technical style of expression, without real meaning and feeling; and thereby, deceiving both myself and others. I well know how ready my friends are to give me encouragement; and how willing to hope the best concerning me; and as I cannot open to them the secret recesses of my heart, they put a too favorable construction on my expressions. You will not then impute it to a want of confidence, though I cannot speak otherwise than generally on this subject. * * * Yet I do hope that I have of late seen something of the vanity of the world; and increasingly feel that it cannot be my rest. The companions of my youth are no more:—our own domestic circle is breaking up:—time seems every day to fly with increased rapidity; and must I not say 'the world recedes.' Under these impressions, I would seek consolation where only I know it is to be found. I long to be able to make heaven and eternity the home of my thoughts, to which, though they must often wander abroad on other concerns, they may regularly return and find their best entertainment. But I always indulge with fear and self-suspicion in these most interesting contemplations; and doubtless, the enjoyments arising from them belong rather to the advanced Christian, than to the doubting, wandering beginner. I am afraid I feel poetically, rather than piously on these subjects;—and while I am in-

Digitized by Google

dulging in vain conjectures on the employments and enjoyments of a future state, I must envy the humble Christian who, with juster views, and better claims, is longing 'to depart and be with Christ.' Nor would I mistake a fretful impatience with the fatigues and crosses of life, for a temper weaned from the world. I could, indeed, sometimes say—

> 'I long to lay this painful head,
> And aching heart, beneath the soil;—
> To slumber in that dreamless bed
> From all my toil.'

And I have felt too those lines—

> 'The bitter tear—the arduous struggle ceases here—
> The doubt, the danger, and the fear,
> All, all, for ever o'er.'

But these feelings, though they may afford occasional relief, I could not indulge in."

The extracts from her correspondence will be found to exhibit, again and again the same constitutional feelings, but counterpoised by a more established faith, and a brighter hope. Yet the improvement took place too insensibly to be ascertained in its immediate causes. At the time the above cited letters were written, perhaps no advice, no representations of the simplicity and certainty of that offer of happiness which is made to us in the Scriptures, would have availed to dispel the obscurity and discomfort of my sister's mind; for constitutional feelings will be long in admitting amelioration.

Digitized by Google

She nevertheless knew how to address consolations to her suffering friends.

TO MISS M. H.

Colchester, December 11, 1807.

It would be to me a most delightful and gratifying task to address you, my dear M., on this occasion, did I believe it to be in my power to speak to your deeply wounded spirit the language of real consolation; but I feel forcibly the insignificancy and inefficacy of empty words, in a case of such sad reality; and I own the task would be only painful, were I not fulfilling your kind request.

If it be consolatory to be persuaded that we do not mourn alone and disregarded; but that in our tears and sorrows we have the deep sympathy of a friend, then indeed, my dear M., you may receive all the consolation such a persuasion can bestow. To a mind so well stored as yours, with religious principles and so well regulated by them, it would be superfluous to enumerate those sources of comfort which the word of God presents to the mourning Christian. Nor would it, indeed become me, being sensible how far I fall short of your attainments in this respect: and I am very sure you are daily receiving these lessons of pious resignation from your dear and excellent father. Have you not, dear M., felt something of the "joy of grief," and that too in a better sense than the poet intends, in the feeling

Digitized by Google

of having a new tie to the heavenly world, while one of the strongest cords that bound your soul to this, is broken. Cowper beautifully rejoices in being the son of parents "passed into the skies" It is indeed a most inspiring idea, and those who have a good, well founded hope of the happiness of their departed friends, cannot be inconsolable at the separation. A friend, who has lately lost a beloved brother, in a letter just received from her, says, "We are always happy in the idea that our dear brother is in heaven." This is the privilege of Christians—this is indeed a joy that the world knows not of. Oh, how can those who are without hope, either for themselves or their friends, support the weight of such a stroke. They are obliged to plunge into gaieties for a refuge from reflection. But how poor a substitute are these for the consolations of religion. * * *

CHAPTER VII.

CORRESPONDENCE ON GENERAL SUBJECTS.—DOMESTIC FEELINGS.

TO MISS E. F.

Colchester, February 14, 1808.

NOTHING less, my dear E. than your actual presence could, I believe, just now, rouse me from the stupor of a long evening's application. I always grow quite rusty in the winter, and almost

Digitized by Google

forget that the world reaches further than from one end of the house to the other. Not but my thoughts take an occasional flight to regions more remote; but they stretch so far into the blue distance, that I can scarcely tell whether they arrive at realities, or rest upon vapor and illusion. You, who have seen us only in the summer, when we are never so regular in our movements, and with a visiter, can scarcely form an idea of the retirement and uninterrupted regularity of our winter life. We seem more like the possessors of some lone castle in the bosom of the mountains, than the inhabitants of a populous town. Yet do not imagine me showing a deplorable face through the grates of my prison, and longing to break forth into the gay world. I assure you I enjoy this retirement—this peaceful and happy home, where my heart and my happiness are centred. When I look round at the dear and yet unbroken circle, I reproach myself if ever I have indulged a feeling of fretfulness—that the glow of thankfulness should ever forsake my heart. Yet we have troubles and anxieties that will sometimes destroy cheerfulness. But I feel persuaded that however I may feel their pressure now, I shall never know happier days than these. And one advantage I have, which must soon forsake me—I am still young; and feel occasionally that flow of spirits—that bounding joy of heart, that ever attends the spring of life. The spirits may indeed be depressed, but they will rise again; and I have often

Digitized by Google

been surprised to feel, not only cheerfulness, but hilarity returning to my heart from no apparent cause, and when circumstances which had plunged me in dejection remain unchanged. * * *

TO MR. J. C.

Colchester, May 19, 1808.

* * * You still ask me to define a compliment: I thought we had agreed that praise bestowed upon real merit, sanctioned by the honest judgment, and administered temperately, ought not to be termed a *compliment*. Whenever praise exceeds the above mentioned limits, it deserves no better name. Now I fear that unless we have courage to violate the common laws of good breeding, we must all acknowledge ourselves to be faulty in this respect. Indeed it seems to depend more upon the character of our associates than upon ourselves, to what degree we offend. I have friends whom I cannot compliment; and I have many acquaintances whom, unless I transgress these laws, I must needs compliment whenever I am in their company. In this view, if I have accused you of such a practice, I am willing to take the blame upon myself. And I will consider myself bound, for your sake as well as my own, better to merit those commendations which neither your politeness could entirely withhold, nor my vanity wholly dispense with. It is difficult to distinguish accurately between an honest desire to please, and that poisonous love of admi-

Digitized by Google

ration which acts rather as a clog than a stimulus to mental improvement;—to judge between a laudable ambition to excel, and a vain and selfish desire to outshine others. How many mortifications should we escape, if we were always more solicitous to deserve the love of a few valued friends, than to excite general admiration! A proud indifference to the opinion of the world is no amiable feeling. But to be independent of its smiles, by valuing chiefly the sweets of inward tranquillity, is indeed a most desirable state of mind—only to be attained by cultivating the best principles, and by seeking approbation from the *highest* source. * * *

TO MISS S. L. C.

Colchester, June 2, 1808.

* * * We have already had some delightful evening rambles. When we are all out together on these happy occasions, I forget all my troubles, and feel as light-hearted as I can remember I used to do some seven or eight years ago, when I scarcely knew what was meant by depression. If I should ever lose my relish for these simple pleasures—if I thought by growing older, my feelings would no longer be alive to them, I should be ready indeed to cling to youth, and petition old Time to take a little rest, instead of working so indefatigably, night and day, upon me. But, alas! he is such a persevering old fellow, that nothing can hinder him: one must needs

Digitized by Google

admire his industry, even though one may now and then be a little provoked with his obstinacy. But seriously; it is not right to shrink from age, much less from maturity; and could I be sure of retaining some of my present ideas, feelings, and sentiments, and of parting only with those that are vain and childish, I think I could welcome its near approach with a tolerably good grace. But I dread finding a chilling indifference steal gradually upon me, for some of those pursuits and pleasures which have hitherto been most dear to me—an indifference which I think I have observed in some in the meridian of life. I am always therefore delighted to discover, in people of advancing years, any symptoms of their being still susceptible of such enjoyments; and in this view the letters of Mrs. Grant afforded me peculiar gratification: increasing years seem to have deprived her of no rational enjoyment. If time clipped a little the wings of her fancy, she was still able to soar above the common pleasures of a mere housewife;—no reflection, by the by, upon that respectable character; believe me, I reverence it; and always regard with respect a woman who performs her difficult, complicated, and important duties with address and propriety. Yet I see no reason why the best housewife in the world should take more pleasure in making a curious pudding, than in reading a fine poem; or feel a greater pride in setting out an elegant table, than in producing a well-trained child. I perfectly

Digitized by Google

glory in the undeniable example Mrs. Grant exhibits of a woman filling up all the duties of her domestic station with peculiar activity and success, and at the same time cultivating the minds of her children usefully and elegantly; and still allowing herself to indulge occasionally in the most truly rational of all pleasures—the pleasures of intel lect.

I dare say you read a paper in the Christian Observer for April, on Female Cultivation.—I feel grateful to the sensible and liberally minded author. I do believe the reason why so few men, even among the intelligent, wish to encourage the mental cultivation of women, is their excessive love of the *good things* of this life; they tremble for their dear stomachs, concluding that a woman who could taste the pleasures of poetry or sentiment, would never descend to pay due attention to those exquisite flavors in pudding or pie, that are so gratifying to their philosophic palates; and yet, poor gentlemen, it is a thousand pities they should be so much mistaken; for after all, who so much as a woman of sense and cultivation, will feel the real importance of her domestic duties; or who so well, so cheerfully perform them? * * *

TO MR. J. C.

Colchester, February 21, 1803.

* * * Mr. —— is the principal subject of your last letter. I have felt quite impatient to add my thanks to those Ann has, I believe,

Digitized by Google

already presented, for your truly friendly exertions to introduce us to his notice; for as your interviews were few, and occupied by much more interesting discourse, to remember two obscure country rhymers was very kind; and so we feel it. As to his remarks on our books, they cannot be otherwise than gratifying. We feel all the difference between such an opinion, expressed by a man of taste and genius, and the customary compliment of—"Sweet pretty things, ladies;—they do you great credit;" &c. I regret he did not leave room to find fault: we are fully conscious that we deserve it. When we first wrote we were not in the habit of taking pains; that is to say, we were not aware what pains are necessary; neither did we know what we had at stake; consequently our earliest productions abound with inaccuracies. Parents are pleased with them, because their children are. But from Mr. ——, who is neither a little boy, nor a father, I had not expected so favorable a critique. But since it would ill become me to question his judgment or taste, the small portion of his praise which I take to my own share, affords me solid satisfaction.

Alas! if a poor wight has ever had the misfortune to hit upon two words that gingle, what a craving appetite is instantly created; and he is perhaps doomed to endure perpetual starvation; or at best to derive a scanty and precarious subsistence from crumbs of praise; though it is as delicious to his palate (and even more so from its

Digitized by Google

rarity) as to that of the favored bard, who receives it as his daily bread. But while I must confess that I have felt the appetite, I can say with sincerity that my happiness does not depend upon dainties of this sort, and that I can live contentedly upon plainer food. I wish to be thankful that I can find enjoyment in simple pleasures, and such as are, as far as I can discover, purified from the dross of selfishness and vanity. I am pleased to look within, and find that I am really happy when our complete family circle is formed; and useful and interesting conversation rises and circulates. Memory can recall many livelier scenes, and fancy could present others still gayer; but neither memory nor fancy can persuade me to be discontented with the present. The loss of every external source of happiness, by the death of our early friends here, forced us to seek it in its native soil:—I loved home; but I knew not how to value and enjoy it; and to the beauties of nature, though blooming around me, I was blind. I am surprised when looking back only a few years, I remember how totally insensible I was to those very scenes which are now constant sources of delight: — though I should have been not a little startled had my taste and feeling been questioned; — I, who have spent many a summer evening on the old ivy-grown town wall, reading Thomson to the friend of my bosom; and would often strain my eyes till they ached, that I might read by moonlight. But now,

Digitized by Google

though I confess I prefer the convenience of a commodious apartment, and willingly endure the gross vapors of tallow, and the barbarism of artificial light; yet, I flatter myself, I know better how to enjoy the glowing landscape, as well as to taste the beauties of the poet; and that I can contemplate the fair face of the moon with sensations not only more rational, but more pleasurable, than in those days of idle romance. That I have an eye to see, and a heart to feel the beauties of nature, I acknowledge with gratitude; because they afford me constant and unsatiating pleasure; and form almost my only recreation. And I indulge the hope that having acquired a love for these simple enjoyments, I shall never lose it; but that in seasons of solitude or of sorrow, I shall continue to find a sweet solace in them. When I am low in spirits, weary, or cross; or especially when worried by some of the teasing realities of life, one glance at the landscape from the window of my attic, never fails to produce a salutary effect upon me. And when "'tis night, and the landscape is lovely no more," if moon, planet, or star, condescends to beam through my casement, I revive under its benign influence. Many might smile at this; especially as I have renounced the title of romantic, and claim that of rational, for my pleasures; but I beg you will not. As a Londoner, I might apologize for dwelling so long upon such a theme; but to a poet, I cannot; and though to a corres-

Digitized by Google

pondent I ought to apologize for so much egotism, to a friend I need not.

The infant smiles of spring have, perhaps, inspired me with this effusion: its return is always reviving and cheering; and while all around is gay and young, we forget that *our* winter has approached a step nearer. I am sometimes startled when I recollect that very probably half my allotted days are already spent; and possibly much more. Years that once appeared such long and tedious periods, now seem to fly onward with such rapidity that they are gone ere they can be enjoyed or improved. Yet a few, at most, of these fleeting seasons, and I, and all I love, shall be forgotten upon earth. You have heard doubtless that we have lost our friend Mrs. ——. Thus we see a family nearly extinct in which, but a few years ago, was centred all that was interesting and dear to us. We have no juvenile recollections with which they are not connected; and the much valued friendships we have formed in later years have not effaced those early impressions. It is difficult to realize such losses. And it is not these alone; for, of a gay and happy circle with whom we were intimately connected, Ann and I are the only survivors.

In the course of the year 1809, our long united family was separated, by the removal of two of its members to London; and if the expressions of regret, on this subject, with which Jane's letters

Digitized by Google

abound, were to be quoted, they would seem, to many readers, to go beyond the merits of the occasion. But none of her feelings were more vivid than those of family affection; and, almost blind to the reason of the case, she would fain have held the endeared circle entire, at the cost of all secular interests. "I regard," she says, "this separation, as one of the greatest sorrows I have ever known. I cannot view it merely as a parting with a friend, whom I may hope to meet again in a few months; for though our interviews may be frequent, our separation as companions is final. We are to travel different roads; and all the time we may actually pass together, in the course of occasional meetings in our whole future lives, may not amount to more than a year or two of constant intercourse."

This foreboding was falsified by the event; for in fact, only a year or two of separation took place between Jane and the brother to whom she here refers;—excepting that short interval, it was his happiness to be the constant companion of her life.

In a letter written to her brothers soon after their leaving home, she says,—"Oh this cruel separation! It would have killed me to have known, when we first parted, how complete it would be. I am glad we deceived ourselves with the hope of keeping up frequent intercourse by letters and visits; it saved us a severer pang than any we then endured. These painful reflections are revived by the disappointment of our fond

Digitized by Google

hopes of a speedy reunion, which is now rendered not only distant, but very doubtful. You, engaged in business, and surrounded with friends, cannot feel as we do on this subject. We have nothing to do but to contemplate our cheerless prospects, or to think of the days that are past. I do not mean it reproachfully when I say, that you will soon learn to do without us; it is the natural consequence of your situation, and we ought to be reconciled to the 'common lot.' But how can I forget the happy years in which we were every thing to each other? I am sometimes half jealous of our friends, especially of ——, who now has that confidence which we once enjoyed. But I will not proceed in this mournful strain; and do not think, my dear brothers, that I am charging you with neglect, or any decrease of affection; though I do sometimes anticipate, and that with bitter regret, the natural effect of a long continued separation."

So eminently characteristic of my sister's mind were feelings of this sort, that I must exhibit them in one or two more quotations from her letters to her brothers.

"We have not yet tried separation long enough to know what its effects will eventually be. I dread lest, in time, we should become so accustomed to it, as to feel contented to live apart, and forget the pleasure of our former intercourse; and I cannot suffer myself to believe what, after all, is most probable, that we never shall be united

Digitized by Google

again.—It is a forlorn idea; for what will two or three flying visits in the course of the year amount to? Life is short, and we are, perhaps, half-way through it already. Well, I ought to be thankful that so large a portion of it we have passed in company, and that the best part too; and as to the future, if I could be sure that years of separation would not, in the least, estrange our affections from each other, and that the glow which warms the youthful breast, would never be chilled by our passage through a cold, heartless world, I would be content. But the idea of becoming such brothers and sisters as we see every where, is incomparably more painful than that of a final banishment, in which we should love each other as we now do.

"We still indulge the hope of renewed intercourse; this hope may indeed be fallacious, but I cannot reject it. In the meantime, we do, and we will continue to love each other; and this is consolation. Long before the dear circle was broken up, I looked forward to the time of separation with dread; chiefly from the apprehension lest that loveliest of plants, family affection (which, in spite of many storms, had been successfully reared, and tenderly cherished among us) should droop, and in time wither; when the distracting cares of life should call off our attention from it. For my own part, I have scarcely yet made the trial; for although the separation has taken place, yet, as my situation remains the same, I have

Digitized by Google

found no difficulty in retaining and cultivating that affection which flourished when we were companions; and I am willing to believe that the scenes you have passed through since you left your home, have rather increased than lessened your attachment to it. It must be delightful, cheering, soothing, to turn from the chilling selfishness of those with whom you must often have to do, to the affection of your family and friends; to know that there are those who do, and who always will love you—whose happiness, in a great measure, depends upon yours, and who consider your interest the same as their own.

"From experience I know how baleful it is to the disposition to be placed in circumstances in which the malevolent passions are liable to be roused, and in which we have to be concerned with those whom it is not only impossible to love, but whom it seems a sort of virtue to dislike. There is the same difference between love and hatred, as between happiness and misery; and more real enjoyment in the pains of the former, than in the gratifications of the latter. I envy those who can look with an eye of benevolent compassion upon the lowest instances of human depravity; who, discerning in their own hearts the seeds of the same hateful dispositions, feel more gratitude for the providential restraints to which they must attribute the difference, than anger towards those who have wanted these advantages."

Digitized by Google

The same strong feelings of affection appear in the following letters to her friend Miss S. L. C.:—

Winchester, May 4, 1809.

* * * This letter was begun some time ago: many circumstances have prevented my finishing it; and I have been in a state of anxiety about the settlement of ——, which has so much occupied my thoughts, that I have not had the heart to resume my pen. His affairs are yet undecided, and we are waiting very anxiously to see what is the will of Providence concerning him. When I remember how kindly our Heavenly Father has hitherto led us on as a family, in credit and comfort, through many struggles, I feel a sweet consolation in committing all our temporal affairs to the same overruling Providence; and hope that my dear brothers, for whose welfare we feel unspeakable solicitude, may be guided by that "pillar of cloud and of fire," by which we have been so far directed. Yet again, when I see that many a one, equally deserving, and equally dear to parents and sisters, becomes a prey to misfortune, and encounters nothing in life but neglect and disappointment, then I say, how can I tell but this may be the case with my dear brothers? Dear L. you would pity me if you knew the many tears I have shed with these forebodings. The world is a chilling place, and going from the bosom of an affectionate family, they must feel it so: but all this is foolish and wrong;

Digitized by Google

I do try cheerfully to commit them to God, and hope to be able to say with some submission, whatever be their fate, "Thy will be done." The separation which now draws so near, I hardly know how to fortify myself to bear; for though the distance is short, and our interviews may be frequent, yet I must view it as the breaking up of our family, so long and so closely united; and a part of it so dear to us, leaving *home*—safe, happy, affectionate *home*, for ever. Excuse me, dear L., my heart is very full on this subject, and in writing to a friend I could not avoid it.

Oh, when the mind is weary and heavily laden with these worldly cares, how refreshing is it to look beyond them all to that rest—to those happy, peaceful mansions that are prepared for the people of God. The delightful hope of seeing all my dear family, and all I love below, safely landed there, makes these fears and anxieties fade into insignificance. But oh! what new fears and anxieties arise here! It may be well that our minds are not capable of measuring the vast disproportion between the concerns of this life and those of eternity, or we should not be able to give a sufficient degree of attention to our present duties. Could we view the most important events that can ever occur to us here, in the same light as we shall look back upon them from the other world, we should scarcely be able to exert a proper degree of energy in the pursuit or management of them.

Digitized by Google

I find myself at the end of my last page, without having noticed the contents of your letter; but really, when a letter has been so long received, one feels ashamed of referring to what can no longer interest, and is scarcely remembered by the writer. I must not begin a comment upon your last year's tour, when you are planning a new excursion. Yet I must say I think you are a very lively, ingenious, and intelligent traveller; and your journal was thought highly entertaining. Let me thank you, my dear L., since I can do it with the most heartfelt sincerity, for the many gratifying expressions of affection and friendship with which your letters abound; they make me alternately proud and humble, but always leave me glad and grateful. * * *

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, Nov. 1, 1809.

* * * Life appears to me now to be wearing out so rapidly, and so large a portion of mine is already spent, that I more than ever regret these long intervals in my communications with my friends. But when I consider the few days which will be all, probably, that I shall actually enjoy in the society of those from whom distance divides me, in the whole course of my life, I am obliged to take comfort in the animating hope of renewing, in a happier state, these delightful friendships, which will there flourish without interruption, and without end; and how refined and unalloyed will they then be—no selfishness or

Digitized by Google

vanity, no little jealousies to imbitter their sweetness.

I regard it as one of the greatest blessings of my life, that all those whom my heart acknowledges as its owners, are travelling towards the same home; so that I can say with sincerity and peculiar emphasis, 'These are the choicest friends I know.' Our *earlier* friendships, though they must ever be remembered with interest and fond affection, were little adapted to promote our truest welfare. To them indeed we are indebted for many benefits of a less valuable nature; but I look to my present circle of friends with gratitude that has a nobler subject. If ever I reach that happy land where *their* possessions lie, I shall have cause for endless thanksgivings to Him who gave me such companions in my way. * * *

The regrets occasioned by the separation of the family were soon afterwards diverted by literary interests. Poetry had formed the bond of union in that circle of friends in which Jane thought herself so happy to be included; and about this time a volume was projected, in which the talents of those of them to whom poetical composition was familiar, should be conjoined. My sister was reluctantly persuaded to take her part in this volume:—she expresses her feelings on the subject in a letter to the friend who conducted the work. Alluding to some verses which she was solicited to surrender for publication, she says:—

Digitized by Google

"They were written to gratify my own feelings, and not for the 'Wreath;' (such was then proposed to be the title of the volume) yet you have pressed them into the service; and what shall I say? I feel that, in permitting them to be published, I make some sacrifice;—as indeed all do who once begin to express their feelings in rhyme; for sentiments and feelings that, in plain prose, would only be whispered in secret to a chosen friend, in this form gain courage, and court the gaze, and bear the ridicule of the vulgar and unfeeling. Since I have had time to think soberly about the 'Wreath'—for this must always be its title, I have felt far less anxious about the share I am to have in it. Now I am not going to tease you with any of my 'morbid humility;' for I am as weary of it, and as angry with it, as you are; but I must just tell you how it affects me. I think I know pretty well how to estimate my poetical talent; at least, I am perfectly persuaded I do not *underrate* it; and, in comparison with my blooming companions in this garland, I allow my pieces to rank as the leaves; which are, you know, always reckoned a necessary, and even pleasing part of a bouquet: and I may add that I am not only contented, but pleased with this station;—it is safe, and snug; and my chief anxiety is not to suffer any thing ridiculous, or very lame to appear:—with these views, I consent. The opinion of the little hallowed circle of my own private friends is more to me than the applauses of a

Digitized by Google

world of strangers. To them my pieces are already known; by them their merits and their faults are already determined; and if they continue to smile kindly upon my simple muse, she will not, I think, easily be put in ill-humour."

This volume was published under the title of "The Associate Minstrels." My sister's contributions to it (the volume being out of print) I have placed among the Poetical Remains subjoined to this volume: they were, none of them, written with any idea of publication; but were the simple expressions of feeling on particular occasions. They exhibit the tender playfulness of her fancy, and the warmth of her heart; but the vigor she afterwards displayed had not then been roused. Yet she has since written nothing more characteristic of herself, or perhaps more beautiful, than the "Remonstrance to Time." In this piece—in the Birthday Retrospect, and in one or two of the pieces, which will be found among the Remains, she has given the portrait of her own mind with so much truth and life, that those who knew her, seem to see and to converse with her while perusing them. To portray itself, her mind needed only the mild excitement of her habitual feelings. But to display its force, it required the stimulus of the strongest extraneous motives. The productions of her pen under these different impulses are widely dissimilar; and perhaps will hardly both please the same readers.

Up to the time to which I am now referring,

Digitized by Google

Jane had written chiefly as an expression of spontaneous feeling; but after the conviction of possessing a talent which might be rendered useful to others was admitted by her, she very rarely wrote for her own gratification, as she had been wont to do. The Poetical Remains contain, however, a few exceptions to this remark; and these exhibit sentiments of a higher order than those which were indulged in early life.

Soon after the publication of the volume just mentioned, my sisters entered upon a task of peculiar difficulty—that of composing a volume of Hymns for the use of children. This difficulty will not be thought lightly of by those who have had much experience in the business of education, and who have allowed themselves ingenuously to perceive the many perplexities which meet the teacher in his attempts to impart to a child any religious ideas that go beyond the mere notion of invisible power; for not only do these notions seem to surpass his apprehension—but they are felt to have in them a repellent contrariety to the prejudices of our fallen nature, in the very earliest developement of the moral principle. The utmost, perhaps, that can be done is to employ a phraseology, and to use illustrations, so well adapted to the infant mind, as that no unnecessary difficulty shall be added to that which is inevitable; and that the memory may, as it were, be taken possession of by notions of religion, before the slumbering evils of the heart are fully quickened.

Digitized by Google

"I think," says my sister in a letter of this date, "I think I have some idea of what a child's hymn ought to be; and when I commenced the task, it was with the presumptuous determination that none of them should fall short of the standard I had formed in my mind. In order to this, my method was to shut my eyes, and imagine the presence of some pretty little mortal; and then endeavor to catch, as it were, the very language it would use on the subject before me. If, in any instances, I have succeeded, to this little imaginary being I should attribute my success. And I have failed so frequently, because so frequently I was compelled to say—'Now you may go, my dear, I shall finish the hymn myself.'"

The authors, in their advertisement justly say that, "The Divine Songs of Dr. Watts, so beautiful, and so justly admired, almost discourage, by their excellence, a similar attempt; and lead the way, where it appears temerity to follow." The want, however, of a greater number of hymns of this kind, has always been felt by parents; and parents, very generally, have seemed to think the want well supplied in this volume. It was soon after followed by a smaller collection of a similar kind, adapted to the use of Sunday schools. In this last, the attempt to simplify language has, perhaps, been carried as far as is at all desirable. If one might judge by the appearance of the manuscript copy of these hymns—its intricate interlineations, and multiplied revisions, it would seem

Digitized by Google

that many of them cost the author more labor than any other of her writings. But a labor of this kind suited well Jane's habitual feelings; for it was at once wholly undisturbed by any ambitious desire of literary distinction, and blessed with the hope of extensive usefulness.

CHAPTER VIII.

REMOVAL TO ONGAR.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1810, Mr. Taylor resigned his ministerial charge at Colchester; and about the same time of the following year, removed with his family to Ongar, having accepted the invitation of the dissenting congregation in that town to become their pastor. During the time in which the place whither her father might remove was uncertain, Jane writes thus to a friend.—

"It is a strange sensation to survey the map of England without an idea of what part of it we are to occupy. Yet perhaps we feel less anxiety about it than you may suppose. Not to be further removed from London than we now are, is our chief solicitude; and to be nearer would be very desirable; more especially on account of being able to see our dear brothers more frequently. For my own part, might I choose a situation, it

Digitized by Google

should be a very retired one among plain good people, whom we could love:—a village, not a town. My love of quiet and retirement daily increases; and I wish to cultivate this taste:—it suits me, and does me good. To part with our house here—the high woods, and the springs, will cost me a struggle; and more especially my dear quiet attic. Might I hope to find such another in our next encampment, I should be less uneasy."

Allusions to the expected change of abode occur in other letters written during the same year, and the commencement of the next.

TO MISS S. L. C.

Colchester, August 10, 1810.

I doubt not, my dear L., that you will agree with me in regarding it as one of the severest lessons we have to learn in the world's school, that our dearest friendships are liable to painful drawbacks;—that in those whom we are most disposed to love and revere there is usually something also to *forgive*. We can survey the world at large, and contemplate its faults and follies with comparative indifference; but with what painful reluctance are we too often compelled to confess, with regard to our nearest connexions and our dearest friends, "I have seen an end of all perfection." You will think this, my dear L., rather a strange sort of salutation after our recent intercourse, and conclude perhaps that it is by

Digitized by Google

way of exordium to a letter of censure, or at least of friendly reproof. But that, I confess, is not my present design:—I was going to add, if you had not interrupted me, that if such unwelcome discoveries are so distressing, it must be proportionably delightful and consolatory when, in some rare instances, increasing intimacy produces increased esteem, and gives a greater solidity to affection. And such, dear L., has been the happy result of my late visit with you: I may venture to tell you so, because I believe we understand each other, and should equally disdain to give or receive flattery. In you, dear L. and S., I have friends whom I think it an honor and a privilege to love; and their returned affection I value as one of my greatest blessings. It would indeed be childish and romantic folly to speak or think thus of new-made friendships; but I think ten years' happy experience will justify it. Our friendship has indeed been of slow growth, and has been reared with some difficulty; but I think it is on that account the more vigorous and healthful. Now I hope it may defy blights and storms; and that it will continue to thrive till placed beyond the reach of either. I have much to thank you for, my dear L.—much for your active kindness; but still more for the silent eloquence of your example.—You have done me more good undesignedly, than you could intentionally; but as this subject would carry me pleasantly on to the end of my paper, I must check myself; and I

Digitized by Google

am sure you have been inclined to check me before. However, what I have said is only honest simple truth; and I felt too much to be quite silent on the subject.

I should be rejoiced to think that the circumstances of our future lives would be more favorable than heretofore, to the cultivation of our friendship. Present prospects indeed seem to render this improbable. Yet we know not how, or where our lot may be ordered; and I do hope, however remotely we may eventually be situated, we shall never cease to cherish a lively affection for each other.

I regret that I have never answered your last truly kind and excellent letter. I little thought then, that an interview would take place before I could reply. I wish, dear L., that it were in my power to answer it in the way that would afford you the most pleasure.—A cloud overshadows my mind; should it ever be dispelled, with what pleasure should I commune with you, and all my friends, on the subject that ought to be most interesting to us. I am ready to think that I should then be able to conquer that reluctance which too often seals the lips, even of sincere Christians, and rejoice in free, unreserved communication. Yet I dread falling into the unfelt technicality of religious conversation. But do not let me discourage you, my dear friend, from making this the principal subject of your letters. If I am at all more in earnest in the pursuit of the best

Digitized by Google

things than in the days of my vanity, I may chiefly attribute the change, under the Divine blessing, to the example and precepts of my pious friends. I think I may venture to say, that I never receive one of their letters that does not make some desirable impression—transient indeed, yet beneficial. In this number I am sure I may place your last, which has frequently been reperused in my hours of retirement, with pleasure and advantage.

I am looking forward with the greatest pleasure to your promised visit. Nor will I allow, dearest L., that even if it were to happen at the time of our expected family meeting, you would be thought an intruder. Indeed I must say, that if ever we regarded any friends with that kind of confidence and affection which is current in one's own family, you and S. may claim that distinction. Perhaps you may be the last visiter we may receive at Colchester:—it does seem at last as if some important changes must take place in our family. Our dear brother's leaving us was the first signal, though we did not then perceive it; from that hour we might have bid adieu to the many uninterrupted years of quiet family happiness with which we had been indulged. Yet I am well persuaded it is all for our good. * * *

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, March 14, 1811.

My dear L.

Not to be behindhand with you in generosity, I take this whole sheet, although I have so re-

Digitized by Google

cently despatched one. But I will not promise to fill it; or if I do, it must be with mere *chat*. Yet as I feel disposed to say a little more than a note ought to contain, I do not see why I should not follow the impulse. How melancholy would be our banishment from friends, if it were not for this delightful substitute for personal intercourse; it is indeed a privilege which, though so common, ought to be regarded with thankfulness. I often think, when enjoying it, of what I used to repeat when I was a good child—

> "Then thanks to my friends for their care in my breeding,
> Who taught me betimes to love *writing* and reading."

There are indeed many times when letter-writing appears a very slow and insufficient means of communication: I have felt it so often since you left us, when I have longed for such a kind of *tete-a-tete*, as *tete alone*, cannot enjoy. But whether or not I shall ever be indulged with more of your much loved society than heretofore, I hope *this* channel of communication will never be cut off. * * * * * * * * * * * * It is vain to wish there were no alloy in the pleasures of friendship; yet I cannot help wishing that, however the weeds of the field may carry on hostilities, the lovely flowers of the garden would never raise a hostile thorn. But, dear L., we know this world would be far too pleasant if we met rebuffs and crosses only from foreigners: we can all say with David, "If it had been mine enemy, I could have borne

Digitized by Google

it." What smooth, pleasant afflictions we should have, if we chose them for ourselves! and what temples of idolatry would our hearts then become! God knows *where* to strike, and how severe soever the chastisement may seem, we are well assured that—

> "Crosses in his sovereign hand,
> Are blessings in disguise."

TO MR. J. C.

Colchester, April, 1811.

* * * In the present unsettled and uncertain state of our family affairs, you may perhaps imagine that I am able to think and write of little else; but I am indeed surprised to find so little perturbation occasioned by them. There was a time when such events would have excited strong emotions of interest and anxiety, and when I could not have believed that I should ever contemplate such changes with composure. But now I have lived long enough to feel assured that life is life, every where, and that no material augmentation of happiness is to be expected from any external sources. Care, I know, will both follow and meet me, wherever I may go—even should I be transplanted from this cheerless desert, into the bosom of my dearest friends. Friendship, far from its availing to shield us from the shafts of care, does but render us vulnerable in a thousand points. Yet, notwithstanding many anticipated troubles, there are times when I regard the

Digitized by Google

possibility of a reunion with my dear brothers, and of joining the beloved circle from which we have hitherto been banished, with feelings of real delight. But our future destination is still so uncertain, that we have no distinct feeling, or very decided wish on the subject. When the idea of our leaving Colchester was first started, I desired nothing so much as a still more retired situation —I longed for the seclusion and tranquillity of an insulated village. A few months, however, have produced a great change in my views, if not in my wishes. Yet I believe it would be but too easy, even now, to persuade me to relinquish other projects, fraught as they are with anxiety and danger, to take refuge in some "holy shade," where I might welcome that "silence, peace, and quiet," for which I feel my heart and soul are made.

Though the harassing circumstances of the last year have driven poetry and its smiling train far from my thoughts, yet I am not forgetful of the kindness which prompted you to speak a word of cheer to a fainting muse. I know I cannot better thank you for your excellent, but long neglected letter, than by saying it has fully answered the kind intention of the writer. What do you say then to my being quite convinced:—shall I tell you that I am thoroughly satisfied with my talents and attainments, and feel an agreeable confidence in my own powers; and that, however injured by envious contemporaries, I am convinced that

Digitized by Google

posterity will do me justice? Do not you believe it? Well then, shall I tell a more probable story, and say, that in this respect at least, I have learned to be content with such things as I have; and that I have in some degree subdued that unworthy ambition which exposes one to mortification and discontent? Fatiguing and sickening is the struggle of competition. I desire to withdraw from the lists. But if this be all, you may still think your friendly endeavors were unavailing. You did not, I am sure, expect that your letter would make any material alteration in my opinions and feelings; yet it was cheering and encouraging: —I assure you I felt it so, and therefore you will not think your pains unrewarded. As a source of harmless, perhaps even salutary pleasure to myself, I would not totally despise or check the poetical talent, such as it is; but it would be difficult to convince me that the world would have been any loser had I never written verses (such I mean as were composed solely for my own pleasure.) I do, however, set a much higher value on that poetical taste, or rather feeling, so far as I have it, which is quite distinct from the capability of writing verse; and also from what is generally understood when people say they are *very fond of poetry*. But while I desire ever to cherish the poetic *taste*, I own it appears to me to be as little my duty as my interest, to cultivate the *talent* for poetry. With different sentiments I am compelled to regard my own share in what we

Digitized by Google

have published for children;—the possibility of their fulfilling, in any degree, the end desired, gives them importance, and renders future attempts of a similar kind, a matter more of duty than of choice. I dare not admit all the encouraging considerations you have suggested; nor can I fully explain what I feel on this subject. That "such reflections are not of a nature to inspire vanity," is true indeed.—No; I desire to be humbled by the thought; a consciousness of unworthiness makes it hard for me to indulge the hope of being rendered instrumental of the smallest good. * * *

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, June 28, 1811.

* * * What a pity it is that language should be so much abused, that what is really *meant* requires to be printed in italics! Of this the poet has most to complain. He *feels*, and perhaps his whole soul is filled with a passage which ninety-nine of his hundred readers, at least, will peruse without emotion. This struck me in reading the first line of Thalaba—"How beautiful is night," which may be read without leaving the smallest impression. I read it so at first; but returning to it, and endeavoring to enter into the feeling with which it was written, I found it to be—"How *beautiful* is night!" and I discovered in these simple words all those inexpressible emotions with which I so often contemplate the dark

Digitized by Google

blue depths, and of which, even Southey could say nothing more striking than—"How beautiful is night!" * * *

TO THE SAME.

Colchester, August 20, 1811.

Having a leisure evening, the last probably before our removal, I devote it to fulfilling my promise to write to you once more from Colchester. Yes, we are really going; and in a few days the place that so long has known us, shall know us no more. Before I quit this scene of the varied interests of my childhood and youth, I ought to give my mind a long leave of absence, and send it back leisurely to revisit the past—to "recall the years in exile driven, and break their long captivity;"—but in the hurry of the moment, the feeling of it is lost; and even if I could afford to send my thoughts on this retrograde excursion, and "up the stream of time could turn my sail, to view the fairy haunts of long-lost hours," I ought not to ask you to accompany them; for they would stay to contemplate scenes and gaze on faces unknown and uninteresting to you. I can invite my friends to sympathize in my present interests, and to survey with me my future prospects; but of *that* fairy land they could only discern a line of blue distance; while to me, "Here a cot, and there a spire, still glitter in the sun." But a melancholy and sentimental retrospection is an unprofitable indulgence—a kind of luxury which, perhaps, I have no right to allow to my-

Digitized by Google

self. Let me rather, if I have time for contemplation, take a more humbling and painful survey; and, reviewing the sins and follies of childhood and youth, resolutely say, "The time past of my life shall suffice to have wrought them." But I want energy to commence a new career. Whether my mind will recover vigor under new circumstances, or will faint under the exertion I have in prospect, remains to be seen: it is a fearful experiment.

Here I sit in my little room: it looks just as it always did; but in a few days all will be changed: and this consecrated attic will be occupied (how shall I tell it you!) by an *excisemen*; for his wife observed to me, when surveying the house—"Ah, this room will do nicely for my husband to keep his books in:"—well, I shall take with me all that has rendered it most interesting; and as to the moonshine and the sunbeams that will continue to irradiate its walls, I would not withhold them from this son of traffic, although they will never kindle a spark of poetry in his eye.

* * * My good friend, be not too confident in your scholarship: you may be master of all the learned languages, and yet a very dunce when you endeavor to decipher the hieroglyphics inscribed on a female heart. If you have a taste for puzzling studies, there are the Babylonish bricks for you, which have hitherto defied so much erudition:—but there would be a chance of success in attempting to decipher *them*. * * *

Digitized by Google

* * If I were qualified to offer the most judicious counsel on subjects where, in fact, I can but reason from distant analogies, I should still doubt whether, recalling the attention to a too interesting object, might not be productive of, at least, a counterbalancing evil. But indeed it is not my part to admonish you· were I to attempt it, I could adopt no better plan than that of making large quotations from your own letters; and then exhorting you "to mind what the gentleman says." If I feel a kind of confidence that your hope will not be blasted, it is by no means founded upon any outward appearances, which indeed at present afford no clue to conjecture; but rather on that cheerful dependance on the Divine guidance, and humble submission to the Divine will, which characterize your feelings on this subject. That promise seems to justify such expectations, "Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass:—He shall give thee the desires of thine heart." Yet it may be dangerous to refer too often to such a ground of hope, lest our very submission should become interested. * * * *

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

CORRESPONDENCE AT ONGAR.

The wishes Jane had indulged were, for the most part, gratified in the removal to Ongar; especially as they regarded the house—its accommodations, and its vicinity: and she once more enjoyed her room; which, though not an *attic*, was all she could desire. The Castle House which my father occupied during the first three years after his removal to Ongar, was highly agreeable in itself, and in the objects which surround it; combining a picturesque antiquity, with the air of seclusion and comfort.

But it was only for a few months that Jane was an inmate at home, during the time her father occupied the Castle House. For soon after the removal of the family to Ongar, she and her sister—much more from the suggestion of their friends, than from the instigation of their own wishes, formed the design of establishing a school; and some measures were taken in furtherance of the plan; and among these preparatory measures, was their spending a great part of the following winter in London, with a view to perfect themselves in some lesser accomplishments. But obstacles arising, their averseness to the plan prevailed; it was quickly abandoned; and they joyfully returned to their father's house.

Her frequent absence from home, her increas-

Digitized by Google

ing literary engagements, and other circumstances, had, before this time, induced my sister to relinquish the practice of the arts, as a profession: this change in her occupations was made without reluctance; though she always retained a taste for drawing; and practised it occasionally, for the gratification of her friends: and she retained also, without any diminution, that vivid relish of the beauties of nature which perhaps seldom exists in its highest degree, apart from some knowledge and practice of the imitative arts.

Very soon after the removal of the family to Ongar, Jane addressed thence her correspondents. The first of these letters is to

MISS E. F.

Ongar, September 23, 1811.

My dear E.

This is the first time I have dated from our new habitation; having at length restored things to something like order, I sit down in my new room to address an old friend. At present I scarcely know where I am, or who I am; but now that I find myself at the old favorite station—my writing desk, and suffering my thoughts and affections to flow in an accustomed channel, I begin to know myself again. And were it not for this, there are certain cares and troubles, bearing my name and arms, which will never suffer me long to question my personal identity: it is, however, by a pleasure that I ascertain it this evening: I ought not therefore to begin by complaining.

Digitized by Google

But, my dear friend, you are looking forward towards a change so much more important than a merely local one, that it may well appear to you comparatively trifling. That you are about to undergo is, of all changes, the greatest and the most interesting, but one; and that one, if brought into comparison, makes even this appear insignificant. A recollection of the certain and speedy termination of every earthly connexion is, at such a season, likely rather to tranquillize, than to depress the spirits:—it is calculated to allay anxiety —not to damp enjoyment. When marriage is regarded as the forming a connexion for *life*, it appears, indeed, a tremendous experiment; but in truth, it is only choosing a companion for a *short journey;* yet with this difference, that if the fellow travellers become greatly endeared to each other, they have the cheering hope of renewed intercourse and perpetual friendship at their journey's end. * * *

TO MISS M. H.

Ongar, March 7, 1812.

* * * Having never yet been called to encounter trials so severe as those with which you have been exercised, I know I cannot fully enter into your feelings; and indeed, in all cases it is so true that "the heart knoweth its own bitterness," that in general perhaps silent sympathy is the best kind of condolence. "To weep with those that weep," is I believe often an alleviation

Digitized by Google

of grief; and the tenderest friendship can do little more than this. It is well that, at those times when the weakness and insufficiency of all human support are peculiarly manifest, such consolations are received from above as enable mourners to rejoice in their losses, and to say, "It is well for me that I have been afflicted." If the sympathy of earthly friends is soothing and grateful to the wounded mind, how consolatory must it be to know and feel that, even in the midst of chastisement, "the Lord pitieth us as a father his children." You know Montgomery's "Joy of Grief," and have felt its touching sweetness, more perhaps than I can do. You have lost a friend—a brother; and you have, I doubt not, enjoyed that sabbath of the mind which Christian resignation produces. In the common harassing trials and vexations of life, there is seldom any mixture of that joy which soothes and tranquillizes the mind under severer trials. But these painful bereavements which, when contemplated at a distance, appear perhaps too heavy to be borne, are rendered supportable by the strong consolations with which they are usually attended; and most frequently become occasions of thankfulness, on account of their salutary effects on the mind.

Prone as our earthly spirits are to cleave unto the dust, what should we be if all our worldly hopes were to be realized. Wise and kind is that system of discipline under which we are all placed; and when, at the close of life, we come

Digitized by Google

to look back upon our mental history, we shall never be inclined to say of this affliction, or of that mortification—"It might have been spared." We shall then see that our prayers for spirituality of mind were answered by the removal of those worldly joys which produced a contrary disposition; and that when we desired that "our affections might be set on things above," our dearest friends were taken there; that so heaven might become dearer, and earth less attractive. Such weaning events must tend, not only to reconcile our minds to the shortness of life, but to make us rejoice in it. We feel that "they are light afflictions," because "they are but for a moment." * * *

TO MR. J. C.

Ongar, March 21, 1812.

* * * If you are indeed so happy as to be able to feel that "the attainment of your hope is worthy only of secondary anxiety," you need not the admonitions of friendship. This is all that is required of us with respect to our earthly attachments:—it is their supremacy in the affections that makes them become sources of sin and sorrow: and that often renders disappointment merciful. You need not fear making me melancholy by reminding me that "we must die to be happy:" it is a truth which, though at first admitted with reluctance, becomes more and more welcome as one earthly hope after another illudes us; till at

Digitized by Google

length it is received as the best and the only source of consolation. We ought, however, to distinguish between the language of Christian hope, and that of worldly despondency;—between the cheerful desire which rises towards "the mansions that are preparing on high," and the gloomy contemplation of that solitude where "the weary are at rest." But it is not merely under the complete failure of our schemes of happiness that this truth is impressed upon us;—though the accomplishment of them may, at first sight, appear inconsistent with the grand condition of our pilgrimage—"in the world ye shall have tribulation," experience soon teaches us how easily our dearest delights become sources of trial;—"each pleasure has its poison too"—so that when the world has done its best for us, we are still mercifully compelled to acknowledge that, "we must die to be happy." May we both be supported by this hope in our conflict with the last enemy!

* * *

About this time several of Jane's friends entered into the married state, and received her congratulations

TO MISS S. L. C.

Ongar, March 24, 1812.

My very dear L.

Though in much uncertainty whether this letter will reach you amidst the bustle of preparation, or after the grand event has taken place, I shall

Digitized by Google

venture to despatch it, hoping that, under whatever circumstances it may arrive, you will not deem it too great a trespass on your time to receive my kindest wishes and most affectionate farewell. Though I have no apprehension of feeling any diminution of interest and regard towards my friend in a new character, yet I cannot but feel that I am taking leave of a name endeared by many a year of friendly intercourse; and while most sincerely rejoicing in a change which seems in every respect likely to promote your comfort and happiness, you will forgive me for mingling with my heartfelt congratulations, some tears of tender regret. There are no forms of expression —at least I cannot command any, which seem adequate to an occasion like the present. With every thing to feel, there seems little to be said: —the best wishes are so comprehensive, that they occupy but a small space; and the strongest emotions are usually the least eloquent. You have, my dear L., my most earnest wishes and prayers for every blessing to attend you in your new and important situation: may you look back upon the transactions of the approaching day with increasing satisfaction and pleasure, every future year of your life!

We can now look back upon past trials with feelings of joy and gratitude;—how different is the coloring of the clouds of care while they are spread over us in dense and unbroken masses, and when they are rolling off far in the distance,

Digitized by Google

and leaving but a dark streak in the horizon. Now we rejoice with you, dear L., in the clear sunshine they have left. * * *

TO MRS. W. (MISS S. L. C.)

Ongar, May 1, 1812.

My very dear friend: in compliance with your kind wish, as well as to gratify my own inclinations, I take up the pen to address a line to you. Circumstances which I need not explain have obliged me to defer writing till it is nearly time to despatch my letter; so that I am under the necessity of sending you an epistle very inadequate to the importance and interest of the occasion. At a future time I shall hope to converse with you at leisure; now I must offer my congratulations with nearly as much brevity as you conveyed your kind adieu; though not with less sincerity and affection.

In this sorrowful world the tones of joy and congratulation are so seldom heard, that one is almost startled by the sound; but they acquire additional sweetness from contrast:—it is truly refreshing to me to turn from various causes of pain and anxiety, to think of my dear L., and contemplate her fair prospects. For though I have lived too long in this changing world to imagine they will never be clouded; yet there is surely every reason to hope that, with the right views and moderate expectations with which you enter your new career, as large a portion of tem-

Digitized by Google

poral happiness will enliven it as can be desired by those who are looking forward towards a better inheritance. May the blessing of Heaven rest upon you, my dear friend, in your new connexion!—it is my sincere and earnest prayer for you.

Every day I live convinces me, more and more, of the folly and uselessness of forming any defined wishes for earthly happiness, either for myself or others that are dear to me;—nothing will do but resigning all to the disposal of Him who not only knows, but does what is best for us. To Him I know you have committed all the events of your future life; and in this cheerful dependance you must be safe and happy. * * *

TO MRS. G. (MISS E. F.)

Ongar, May 11, 1812

My dear E.

There was no part of your last kind letter more agreeable to me than that which expressed a wish for maintaining a more regular and frequent epistolary intercourse: on this the existence of our friendship must now, more than ever, depend; at least, without this kind of communication it cannot be either pleasant or profitable. You will give me credit for the sincerity of this declaration; although my apparent inattention might well awaken contrary suspicions; at least in a more recent friendship. But you and I, dear E. are too old and sober-minded to indulge dreams of cruel neglects and faithless friendships: having, as I

Digitized by Google

believe, entertained a sincere regard for each other for many years—a regard which, though formed in the doubtful ardor of youthful enthusiasm, has healthfully survived those short-lived transports: —it is no longer romantic to indulge the hope that the mutual affection will be as permanent as it is sincere. I am not indeed insensible to the disadvantageous consequences of an almost total suspension of personal intercourse: and the still more unpropitious effects of an entire dissimilarity of interests and of occupations: still I am inclined to believe that there is a peculiar interest attached to the connexions formed in childhood, or early youth, which is not easily lost; and that those who are inseparably united with the history of our *fairy years* may insure a place in the lively and affectionate recollections, even of declining age. I have wandered so far from my unfinished apology, that I think you will not wish me to retrace my steps in search of it; I will therefore only add my sincere wish and intention to atone for past remissness by future regularity.

Letter-writing is much more of a task to me than it used to be: often, when I should enjoy a *tete-a-tete*, to converse on paper with a friend is almost burdensome. I know not whether it is that I am growing old, or stupid, or lazy; though, I rather suspect, all three. Seriously however, I am certainly experiencing some of the disadvantages of increasing years. With the follies of youth, a portion of its vigor too is fled; and being

Digitized by Google

deficient in constitutional or mental energy to supply its place, my mind is hanging as limp as a dead leaf. But perhaps, dear E., you will scarcely thank me for talking of the effects of *years*, in which respect I am so little beforehand with you. I do not however ascribe all to the depredations of time; — many a gay lady of five-and-forty retains more of youth than I do; and you, though not a gay lady, will long, I hope, appear a young and lovely wife. So I will take this opportunity to turn to a more pleasing subject, and tell you how much I rejoice to hear from yourself how agreeably you are realizing the fair prospects which but lately opened upon you; and from *others*, with what grace and propriety you occupy the new and important station upon which you have entered: may you long enjoy and adorn it, my dear friend! Earthly happiness (comfort, I should rather say, for I believe the former exists only in the Dictionary) is indeed to be prized when it does not interfere with higher pursuits; and still more so when it tends to assist and stimulate them.

The ease and leisure afforded by such a lot as yours, is, in this view, highly desirable: it presents the most favorable opportunities of usefulness to others; and to yourself, of growing in meetness for the heavenly inheritance. Happy are you, dear E. that it is your highest ambition thus to improve them. While some are driven through life as over a stormy sea — incessantly

Digitized by Google

tossed and thwarted by the restless billows, till they arrive, faint and weary, at the haven of rest; others are permitted to ramble at leisure through a pleasant vale, till they gradually ascend to the everlasting hills: and of how little consequence is it by which course we are led, so our wanderings do but terminate in the same blissful country! We all receive that kind of discipline which our peculiar dispositions require; and if it is severe, we may be sure it is necessary too. * * *

CHAPTER X.

FIRST AND SECOND VISIT TO DEVONSHIRE.

My sister's taste for the beauties of nature was gratified about this time, by a residence of some months in the most romantic part of Devonshire. The occasion of this visit must be mentioned, as it determined the course of her life for several succeeding years.

The brother to whose part it has fallen to prepare this memoir, had lately spent some months in the west of England, for the recovery of his health, and had returned to London in a great degree restored; but on the approach of the following winter, being advised to seek a milder climate, it was determined that his two sisters should accompany him to Devonshire

Digitized by Google

Having just before roamed over a great part of that delightful country, and become familiar with its beauties, it was to him a pleasure of the liveliest kind, to introduce his sisters to these novel scenes. To young persons whose taste for the beauties of nature is very strong, and who have been accustomed only to the uniform surface, and the simple rural amenities of the eastern counties, a first sight of the scenery of the west of England excites the most vivid delight. Jane felt these pleasures to the full; and even after a second and a lengthened residence at Ilfracombe had rendered her familiar with its scenery, the pleasure with which she rambled daily among its rocks was undiminished.

During the whole of the first winter passed at Ilfracombe, the change in my sister's mode of life was almost as great as could be; for instead of the assiduous occupation of time to which she had always been accustomed, the mornings, whenever the weather permitted, were spent in social or solitary rambles; and the evenings, most often, in agreeable society—and some highly agreeable society was indeed found at Ilfracombe. Except in maintaining correspondence with her friends, I do not know that she wrote anything during this winter: the time, however, was not lost, for she not only improved in health, but gained expansion of mind, enriched her imagination, and acquired those more free habits of thought which are scarcely compatible with unremitted application

Digitized by Google

Yet she was impatient of this long-continued inaction. "I have found," she says "(but not now for the first time) that any great external interest, for a continuance, will not agree with my mind; it is living upon dainties, instead of plain food. Accustomed to expect my evening's entertainment from myself, in some kind of mental exertion, a complete relaxation from this, and depending wholly, for many months, on external means of gratification, is a kind of indulgence which will not do to live upon; my mind never had so long a holyday, and I feel it is time to send it home."

Referring to the same time, in a letter of a later date, she writes—

"As to my employments during the winter, it is very true I have been disappointed in my expectations of writing; but I have not neglected a favorable opportunity; for none has presented itself. I went to Ilfracombe, expecting to find there complete retirement, and much leisure. You know how mistaken we were in this calculation. The engagement of the evening with our welcome visiters, completely deprived me of the only time I can ever profitably devote to writing. I am far, however, from thinking this a lost winter, or that I have enjoyed a too expensive pleasure; for I would not but have known and seen what I have at Ilfracombe, for twice the expense of time and money. I do, however, look forward, with much satisfaction, to the prospect of resum-

Digitized by Google

ing my former habits, after this long relaxation; and whenever I take up the pen again, I hope to reap the advantage of the past winter."

The swell of the sea is not indeed so great at Ilfracombe, as on the northwestern coast of Cornwall; but when the pent-up tides of the Bristol channel meet a hurricane from the Atlantic, and the contention falls upon the sharp and towering precipices of this coast, the beauty and terror of a sea-storm can hardly be better displayed. Not at all intimidated by rain or wind, Jane would seldom stay within, when the breaking of the sea over the house in which we lodged, announced the coming storm.

The neighborhood of Ilfracombe has also, in several spots, the charm of rural and sequestered beauty. The deep ravines which commence upon the elevated moors, and run down to the sea-side, are, many of them, thickly wooded, and studded with stone-built, and ivy-covered cottages; and though not on the largest scale, some of these glens present the most finished combinations of picturesque objects. Scenery of this kind depends upon the decorations of summer, for its effect, much less than the wooded slopes of a merely rural country; for *there* it is alone the clustered evergreens that hide the desolation of the season; but *here* the permanent forms are equally beautiful with those that are evanescent: and indeed, many of these spots produce a more congruous effect upon the mind, in the gloom of

Digitized by Google

a December afternoon, than under the splendors of July.

The description with which the Fragment opens, that stands first among the Poetical Remains, will be recognised by the reader who has traversed the coast of North Devon. The peculiar scenery of Lea filled Jane's imagination; it was her favorite walk, and having heard the melancholy story of a secluded being who, with his maniac daughter, had long inhabited one of its few dwellings, she fixed upon it as the scene of a history which floated in her mind for three or four years, but of which no more than what is now published, was ever committed to paper.

The following letter to her friend, Mr. J. C., should here find a place.

Ilfracombe, November 14, 1812.

* * * Though you may consider this as a tardy performance of my promise, it is, I assure you, but the second letter I have dated from hence. I perceive that it is all in vain to run to the remotest corner of the earth for retirement and leisure; at least it is in vain to seek for them amid the rocks of Ilfracombe. * * *

I wish I could introduce you for a moment (or as much longer as you could stay) to our comfortable fireside, around which we often talk of those we have left, till we forget the distance which separates us. * * * I promise not to

Digitized by Google

detain you long with descriptions of the scenery around us, to which it would probably be more toil than pleasure to listen. For in such cases, where the imagination of the writer can fly, that of the reader must climb; and perhaps she is wholly indisposed to the exertion. Besides that, it is not the most agreeable thing to be told that "you can form no idea—you can't imagine—you never saw any thing like it," &c. So then, to do the thing more politely, I must tell you that I had formed no idea of the kind of scenery with which we are surrounded; and that I had never before seen any thing like it, was evident from the effect it at first produced upon me.

Ilfracombe is situated in a deep valley, surrounded on one side by barren hills, and on the other by stupendous rocks, which skirt the sea. Our lodgings very pleasantly overlook the harbor, which affords us constant entertainment. The sea is close behind the house; and is so near a neighbor that, during the last high tides, the waves rose in immense sheets of foam, and fell over a high wall opposite our chamber windows: it also flowed into the house in front, and kept us close prisoners. Our walks in every direction are so interesting that, while the weather permitted, we spent a great part of the day abroad. Our rambles among the rocks I enjoy most; though at first they excited sensations of awe and terror, rather than of pleasure. But now we climb without fear amid a wilderness of rocks, where

Digitized by Google

nothing else can be seen, and nothing heard but the roar of the distant sea: here the only path is over the huge fragments which lie scattered in all directions, and which it requires some courage as well as dexterity to scale. Besides these, we have several cheerful walks, commanding the sea, bounded to the north by a beautiful line of the Welsh mountains. Their aspects are very various; at times appearing only like faint clouds in the horizon; but when the weather is clear, and the sun shines upon them, they exhibit an exquisite variety of light and shade, and delicate coloring, finished, by distance, like the finest miniature. From some of the highest hills we have distinctly perceived the buildings on the nearer part of the coast;—to the west the wide ocean is before us,

> "Now sparkling with sunbeams, now dimpled with oars,
> Now dark with the fresh-blowing gale."

The rocky cliffs of Lundy island add beauty and interest to the scene. * * *

Early in the spring of the year 1813, we prepared to leave Ilfracombe: in the expectation of doing so, my sister says—

"In a week or two we expect to take our leave of Ilfracombe:—thus ends another short chapter of the little history of life:—like many others, its contents have not corresponded with the title:—it has disappointed our fears, and greatly exceeded our expectations of enjoyment: may it end with a hymn of praise!"

Digitized by Google

The most romantic part of the North Devon coast is about eighteen miles east of Ilfracombe: this spot we determined to visit, on our way home: —the excursion is described by Jane in a letter written at Linton, to her father and mother.

"Here we are at this celebrated part of North Devon: we arrived yesterday, about four o'clock; and I think you will pity us when I tell you that, from an hour after we left Ilfracombe to the present moment, it has rained incessantly. We calculated upon getting in time enough to ramble before evening; and to spend the whole of this day in exploring the beauties of the place; instead of all this, we have been obliged to content ourselves with sitting before a blazing fire—turning over an odd volume of the Gentleman's Magazine, Warner's Walk in the Western Counties, and The Miseries of Human Life. Nor is this all; for I awoke yesterday at Ilfracombe with every symptom of a bad cold; which is now at its height; so that I have had no hope of going out, even if the weather had cleared up:—this is pleasure! Ann and Isaac have twice ventured out in the course of the day; and have taken a hasty view of the valley of Rocks, and of the village of Linmouth; and I have had the satisfaction of hearing a description of what I am within half a mile of, and came on purpose to see. However, not to make the worst of our story, I must add, that when we arrived within about two miles of Linton, a scene of grandeur and beauty

Digitized by Google

opened upon us which alone would repay us for coming. We had travelled several miles over a high, wild, and dreary tract of country;—giving the idea of travelling over the world as a planet, and rendered still more desolate in appearance by torrents of rain. We were obliged to continue in the chaise in ascending hills where travellers almost always alight to relieve the horses; and were even constrained to do the same in passing a frightful precipice, where there is neither fence nor hedge; and where a chaise, very lately, fell over. At this point, a fine mountain scene opened upon us; and a sudden turn of the road discovered the enchanting vale and village of Linmouth, close to the sea, and at the base of rocks of tremendous height, and most exquisitely diversified in their coloring. After a long and steep ascent, we reached the inn where, fortunately, the room we occupy overlooks a considerable part of this fine prospect. This inn stands near the edge of the precipice that overhangs the sea, and seems to be in the clouds. To-morrow morning we are to meet a chaise from Minehead, at the top of the opposite hill—the ascent being so steep that chaises rarely come across the valley."

The letter is continued from Axminster:—"On Thursday morning, finding my cold surprisingly better, and the weather being finer, I resolved, at least, to see the valley of Rocks: so at half-past five, we set off full speed; and I was gratified with a hasty sight of it. The scene gives the

Digitized by Google

idea of gigantic architectural ruins; and the impression left upon my mind by the novelty and silent solemnity of this magnificent scene, will not soon be effaced. We returned to breakfast at the inn, and directly afterwards set off to climb the opposite hill; attended by a horse with panniers, carrying our luggage. This walk afforded us an opportunity of seeing something of the beauties of the vale of Linmouth, which I will not attempt to describe: at the summit of the hill we found our chaise; and at the end of the day reached Taunton; where we staid a day with Mr. ——, and the next, set out for Axminster; and found the kindest welcome from our dear friends."

With these kind friends, and with others in the south of Devon, and Dorsetshire, some weeks were very agreeably passed by my sisters, before their return to their father's house; where they spent the summer.

During her stay at Ongar, Jane took an active part, I believe for the first time, in a Sunday school, then lately established at some distance from the town; but of her labors in the Sunday school I shall again have occasion to speak.

On the approach of the autumn it once more seemed desirable to return to Devonshire; and Jane's sisterly affection was now tried, not only by the call to banish herself from a kind and comfortable home, but by the necessity of leaving behind the companion of her former excursion; for her sister was now preparing for a final separation

Digitized by Google

from the paternal roof. Jane expresses her poignant feelings in this separation from the constant companion of her life, in a letter addressed to Mr. J. C. some time after her return to Devonshire:—

Ilfracombe, February 17, 1814.

Although many months have now elapsed since we parted in the Barnstaple coach, and in all that time you have received nothing from me but a postscript, I cannot plead in excuse any of the engagements with which you accuse me:—of the whole list, there is not more than one that I can plead guilty even of thinking about. Yet your conjecture, that I have been "wondrous busy," is perfectly correct. You well know how one week after another slides away, in every day of which we intend to write to our friend "to-morrow;" and when to-morrow comes, even if some pressing occupation does not fill it, it finds us so dull and flat, that we resolve to devote the evening to some "outer court" correspondent, for whom the only requisite materials are pen, ink, and paper. Thus it was with me during the months of November and December: of January I can give a better account; for one fatal morning, early in that month, Miss M. and I set off for Barnstaple. I said "Good-by; I shall return on Saturday;" but it was exactly a month before I saw Ilfracombe again; being imprisoned by the snow all that time. I wished to have written to you from

Digitized by Google

thence, but even friendship is not warm enough to keep ink and fingers from freezing during a sharp frost; except by the fireside; and that agreeable trio—fire, friendship, and solitude, did not meet me there. I have been returned but a fortnight, the last week of which has been occupied in entertaining Mr. G. who has been our guest. He left us this afternoon; and this evening I am at your service; having clearly proved it to be the first in the last five months in which I could write to you.

Much has occurred in our little circle since we last met;—so much that if you were to ask me now, I could scarcely get through the whole The recollection of all that has taken place sometimes makes me melancholy; and sometimes it makes me glad: but oftener, it makes me neither the one nor the other: but this indifference, or rather sameness of feeling under the important changes of life, always makes me melancholy when I think about it.

After walking so far through the vale of tears, inseparable companions, Ann and Jane are at last divided:—a few short interviews is all, perhaps, we shall ever more see of each other on this side the grave. We are both still in the vale of tears, and shall continue to weep and to smile as heretofore; but not together: our way will still be chequered by cloud and sunshine; but it may often be stormy weather with one, while the other is enjoying a clear sky. But tears will not always

Digitized by Google

flow;—the heart-rending feelings once over, and the common temperature of happiness returns. It is but occasionally that I have leisure to ruminate upon our separation; and then it is difficult fully to realize it. It is very true that we cannot always be as miserable as we wish—cheerfulness steals upon us insensibly, and we are surprised to find ourselves tolerably happy again, in spite of our heroic resolutions to the contrary. You will think these reflections unsuitable to the occasion, and perhaps say, that I am too inexperienced in suffering, to offer remarks upon the subject: of this, however, I must be allowed to be the best judge: though I have hitherto been mercifully preserved from the severer and more sudden strokes of the rod, I am not unacquainted with sorrow; and it is in consequence of what has passed in my own mind that I am skeptical as to the existence of such a thing as incurable grief, though it is often talked of. * *

In the beginning of October, Jane and her brother were once more comfortably settled at Ilfracombe; and though the social attractions of the place, were now less than they had been in our first visit, it still contained kind friends, and the advantage of more leisure and seclusion was now wished for, enjoyed, and improved by my sister, who presently resumed her literary pursuits with eagerness.

At the close of this year, Jane addressed a let-

Digitized by Google

ter to her sister, on the occasion of her marriage to the Rev. Joseph Gilbert—then one of the tutors of the Independent College at Rotherham. From this letter the following passages are extracted:—

"Ilfracombe, December 18, 1813.

"My dear Ann,

"I cannot suffer this interesting morning to pass without something of a salutation from Ilfracombe; and I dare say this letter will arrive in good company; but I am sure no one will address you who can feel on this occasion either so glad, or so sorry as I do. So far as you only are concerned, I think I am entirely glad, and feel as perfectly satisfied and happy as one can do about untried circumstances. But I cannot forget that this morning which forms one indissoluble partnership, dissolves another, which we had almost considered so. From the early days of "Moll and Bett," down to these last times, we have been more inseparable companions than sisters usually are; and our pursuits and interests have been the same. My thoughts of late have often wandered back to those distant years, and passed over the varied scenes which chequered our childhood and youth:—there is scarcely a recollection, in all that long period, in which we are not mutually concerned, and equally interested. If this separation had taken place ten years ago, we might, by this time, have been in some degree estranged from each other; but having passed so

Digitized by Google

large and important a portion of life in such intimate union, I think we may confidently say it never will be so. For brothers and sisters to separate, is the common lot;—for their affection and interest to remain unabated is not common; but I am sure it is possible; and I think the experience we have already had proves that we may expect its continuance. Farewell, my dear Ann! and in this emphatical farewell, I would comprehend all the wishes, the prayers, the love, the joy, and the sorrow, which it would be so difficult to express in more words. If there is a dash of bitterness in the grief with which I bid you farewell, it is only from the recollection that I have not been to you the sister I might have been. My feelings have been so strongly excited to-day, that I cannot bear more of it; and must leave you to imagine what more I would say on this occasion.

"I cannot—no, I cannot realize the busy scene at the Castle House, nor fancy you in your bridal appearance. I intend to place myself before the view of the house, about the time I imagine you are walking down the gravel-walk, and stand there while you are at church, and till I think you are coming back again. How strange—how sad, that I cannot be with you! What a world is this, that its brightest pleasures are, almost invariably, attended with the keenest heart-rendings."

My mother's feelings in parting with her daugh-

Digitized by Google

ter, though she had every reason to rejoice on the occasion, were very strongly excited; with the hope of administering comfort, Jane addressed to her a letter, of which the following is a part:—

"I hope, that even so soon as this, time has performed his kind office, and taken off the edge of your sorrow. If I did not know that he can perform wonders, even in a few days, I could not venture to say so. I was grieved indeed, but not much surprised to hear that you felt the parting so acutely; and when reading your description of it, almost congratulated myself that I was so far off. Now, however, I would gladly come, and be your comforter if I could. My dear father and mother, we have felt much for you;—believe that you have the love and the prayers of your absent children. I seldom close my eyes without thinking of you, and hoping you are comfortable. I feel the separation more this time than I did before, though in all other respects I enjoy as much comfort as I can expect to do in this world. I am rejoiced to know that you have had the solace of dear S.'s tenderness; and in this respect you have indeed been gainers by my absence; she has, I know, done all that human sympathy can do, to console and soothe you.

"I walked here (to Barnstaple) last Wednesday, with Miss M. without any fatigue, though it is ten miles of incessant up and down hill. The deepest snow remembered in Devonshire, set in the day after I came, and has so blocked up the roads,

Digitized by Google

that I am detained a close prisoner. I intended to have returned on Monday; but they are so unused to snow here, that no one will venture to go, though I should not be afraid. I cannot tell, therefore, how long I may be detained. Though I am very comfortable at Mr. ——'s, I am now impatient to return home, as I left my brother only for a day or two."

The snow continued to render the road between Barnstaple and Ilfracombe nearly impassable for more than a month. Jane's solicitude on her brother's account, induced her to hazard the journey the first day on which it was pronounced to be practicable; and she returned to Ilfracombe on horseback, sometime before any carriage could pass the road.

Without obtruding what relates to myself, more than I wish in this memoir, I could not fully display the self-denying, indefatigable, and tender assiduity with which Jane devoted herself to her brother's comfort; to promote his restoration to health, was indeed, the business of her life, during several years. The reader of her memoir must not forget this principal feature of Jane Taylor's character—her generous devotedness to the welfare of those she loved, though the exemplification of it may appear in these pages less prominently than it might.

The seclusion and leisure of this second winter at Ilfracombe were employed by my sister in writing the greater part of the Tale, published

Digitized by Google

some time afterwards. She commenced it with a specific idea of the qualities she designed to exhibit, but with no definite plan for its execution. In pursuit of the same general object she followed, every day, the suggestion of the moment; and this was, perhaps, the only way in which she would ever have written. It was her custom, in a solitary ramble among the rocks, for half an hour after breakfast, to seek that pitch of excitement without which she never took up the pen. This fever of thought was usually exhausted in two or three hours of writing, after which she enjoyed a social walk, and seldom attempted a second effort in the day; for she had now adopted the salutary plan of writing in the morning only. To this plan she adhered ever after, with only occasional exceptions.

A letter to Mrs. G. exhibits the tranquil happiness she enjoyed at Ilfracombe.

April 23, 1814.

* * * I doubt not but your natural vivacity and vigor of mind will enable you to retain, much longer than I shall, some of the sweetest feelings of youth. Those which are connected with its follies we wish not to retain; but there is a delicious glow of feeling which already I am conscious has lost much of its warmth. At this beautiful reviving season, I am reminded of *that spring* which is forever passed away. But I would not have this letter tinged with the melan-

Digitized by Google

choly such reflections are apt to bring with them, especially as it is very far from my usual state of feeling. I am as happy now as I can expect ever to be in this troublous world; and could I feel a little more security of the continuance of my present circumstances, I should not have a wish with respect to external things: but this would be too much like a rest to be good for me. Even the recollection of the spring of life being gone by, occasions melancholy only because our views are so much confined to this infancy of our existence—to cultivate an intimacy with the circumstances relating to its future stages is truly the only wisdom; for this alone can reconcile us to the decaying conditions of mortality. I can easily believe that those who have but lately entered into the important relations of life, feel rather as if it were but just begun, than approaching its termination; but I, who am sailing down the stream of time without any such interruption, am more conscious of progression, and have more leisure to look back upon the past, and to expect the future. But I had intended quite another strain —perhaps the scene before me has made me thus sentimental. The tide is just filling the pretty harbor, and the evening sun shines mellowly on the rich rocky banks opposite, and on the venerable hill which fronts the port. I enjoy, though not as I once should have enjoyed, this fine spring, in this charming place.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

RESIDENCE AT MARAZION—PUBLICATION OF "DISPLAY," AND "ESSAYS IN RHYME"—CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE YOUTH'S MAGAZINE.

My sister's literary engagements were suspended during the following summer, by our leaving Ilfracombe. Having determined to spend the next winter in Cornwall, we held ourselves ready to take the first opportunity that should offer of going thither by sea. It was on a fine evening in June that we left Ilfracombe in a small fishing vessel, intending to pass round the Land's End, to Mount's Bay; but Jane suffered so much from sickness, that in the evening of the next day we landed at St. Ives; and after spending a few days there, proceeded to Marazion, where we had already engaged lodgings.

If she had not found agreeable society at Marazion, and formed there some friendships which she highly valued, my sister would have continued to regret the rocks and solitudes of North Devon; its gloomy and romantic scenery suited peculiarly her tastes, and the temper of her mind, which were little pleased by the business, and bustle, and open bareness of Cornwall. Yet nothing hardly can be more agreeable than the aspect of Mount's Bay; and Penzance is, perhaps, one of the most pleasantly situated towns in the kingdom. The country in its immediate neighborhood is

Digitized by Google

more wooded than other parts of the county; and the Bay, the villages on its margin, the Mount, with its castle, and the distant rocky hills, form a most complete and pleasing picture.

At Marazion she staid long enough to form a strong local attachment; our mode of life was suited to her tastes; her occupations filled her thoughts, and were relieved by frequent intercourse with two or three individuals whom she was happy to call her friends. Speaking of her feelings at this time, she says—

"The ease, tranquillity, and comfort of my present lot, so perfectly congenial to my temper and feelings, demand my constant thankfulness. It is no business of mine to inquire how long it will last. Long, I know, it will not last; and this I feel so sensibly, that my anxiety for myself, and my dear family, lessens as it respects our prosperity in this world, and increases for better things—that it may be well with us all in the next."

And again, in a letter to her mother—

"Notwithstanding the toil of writing, it has its pleasures; and often, both this winter and last, when I have sat down at ten o'clock, all alone, in our snug parlor, with a cheerful fire, and with nothing to interrupt me for four hours, I have really felt very happy. As to my writing 'under disadvantageous circumstances,' it is so far from being the case, that I am sure I can never expect to be more favored. All domestic cares, except just giving orders, and settling my accounts, are

Digitized by Google

completely taken off my hands by Mrs. Thomas. The afternoon suffices for the needle-work I have to do; and we are little interrupted by visiters; besides the rare privilege of having a room and fire quite to myself during the morning. I cannot therefore plead my present circumstances in excuse, either for the poverty, or slowness of my writing; for I do actually, what you describe as so desirable—'sit down composed and unembarrassed in my study.' Indeed, I cannot be sufficiently thankful for the large share of comfort I have enjoyed the last three years; with nothing to try my temper, and exempt from most of those unpleasant realities which you mention as inseparable from the charge of a household. But I do not wish to fly from family cares; and one of the satisfactions of returning to you, for a time, would be, that I might share them with you."

From the friendships above alluded to, and from intercourse of a more general kind enjoyed at Marazion, Miss Tayler derived new and important advantages. For, hitherto, her connexions had been almost exclusively within the pale of one religious community; but her Marazion friends were, most of them, members of the established church, and moreover, very zealously attached to its constitution and its forms. She had also full opportunity of observing the state and spirit of another religious body—the Wesleyan Methodists, who, in the western part of Cornwall are the predominant sect She ever

Digitized by Google

after looked back upon the expansion of her views and feelings, which took place at this time, with great satisfaction. Yet her attachment to the principles in which she had been educated did not become at all less firm, but on the contrary, it was made more decided by the comparison she had now the means of forming, between different practices and opinions.

There being at Marazion no society of congregational dissenters, Miss Taylor attended alternately the service of the Established Church, and that of the Wesleyan Methodists; and she gave her assistance regularly, at the Sunday school connected with the former—making only this exception,—that she should not be required to teach the church catechism. The concession was amicably yielded; and in this school she continued to labor with great pleasure, during the two years of her residence at Marazion. Her exertions on the Sunday were however so much beyond her strength, that they evidently impaired her general health. To those whose six days are occupied with general business, or manual labor, Sunday school teaching may, by the agreeable excitement it affords to the mind, and to the feelings, be in the very best sense of the word, a real and beneficial *holyday*. But so great is the exhaustion consequent upon continued intellectual effort, that those who are called to undergo this peculiar species of toil may perhaps in most instances, lawfully use the day of rest for them-

Digitized by Google

selves. But Jane, far from yielding, on her own behalf, to a plea of this kind, adhered so resolutely to the principle of "doing what she could," that she continued her labors in the Sunday school during years of declining health; and indeed, till the very last day of her attending public worship, a few weeks before her death.

Soon after our removal to Marazion, my sister resumed writing the Tale she had commenced at Ilfracombe; and late in the same year it was sent to press, under the title of "Display." The favor with which this little work was received, and more especially the high praise bestowed upon it by a few individuals, whose judgment and sincerity could not be questioned, produced a very desirable effect upon her mind; for it gave her, in some degree, that confidence in her own powers which she so much needed. Hitherto, she had persisted in attributing almost the whole success of the works in which she had had part to her sister; but *this* was all her own; and she was constrained to believe that she could write well, and that too in a higher line than she had before attempted;—for Display was admired on account of excellences of a higher kind than such as belong merely to an entertaining or pathetic fiction. The advice which had been long and often urged upon her, of undertaking to write for mature readers, was now greatly corroborated. Yet, perhaps, had she attempted a fiction upon a more extended scale, she might have found herself out

Digitized by Google

of her proper sphere. For the beauties of her style accord best with a brief, inartificial, and condensed narrative. Breadth of design, amplification, and digression, seemed not to be within her range—her simple story is merely a thread, supporting a series of exquisite ornaments, and sparkling graces. That knowledge of the human heart which is evinced in Display, might merit to be called profound; but it is exhibited in touches so delicate, that they might escape the notice of the reader whose eye was less quick and piercing than that of the author. But probably it has been these fine and half-hidden beauties that have procured for this Tale the praise (not often won by mere fictions,) of being read again and again, with new pleasure.

The volume did not however escape without some strong animadversions — chiefly on the ground of the opinions professed in it. In reply to some observations on one point, the author says—

"As to the dancing, I certainly did not think I had erred on the strict side; and I think I have observed the distinction you mention, of not objecting to dancing in *itself*. The children at Stokely, you may remember, were all dancing very merrily one evening. But, in fact, except with mere children, there is no such thing as 'select christian dances.'—Go where you will, it is the world who dance; and the serious who do not.

Digitized by Google

E —— is an instance of what is said about Emily; her newly acquired religion is so far from having made her dull or precise, that there are many whom I have seen shake their heads at her youthful sprightliness. Yet since she has been a Christian, she says she does not wish to dance, especially as it could not be without associating with those who think only about this world. As to what Mr. Leddenhurst says about 'dancing through the world,' it is a remark I have heard made by those who are very far from being puritanical in their manners, or narrow in their views; and I merely understand by it, that a person of a contemplative and serious turn of mind, impressed with the grand realities of religion, and intent upon remedying, as far as possible, the sin and misery of the world, will not be much disposed to go 'dancing through it.'"

The suggestions of her friends were so far admitted, as to induce Miss Taylor to look wider abroad than hitherto, for the topics of her next undertaking. But to express her opinions on grave subjects, in naked prose, was more than she could dare. In verse, she felt as if sheltered. She therefore determined to write what she thought and felt, with less reserve than hitherto, but under the cover of poetry. Such were the views with which (soon after the publication of Display) she began writing her "Essays in Rhyme." With an exception presently to be

Digitized by Google

mentioned, the composition of this volume occupied her time during the remainder of her stay at Marazion.

Throughout the winter of the year 1814—15, my sister read much more than she had ever before done, in a like extent of time. The works she selected were of the kind best adapted to invigorate the understanding—her taste in reading was for history, which always excited in her mind a much deeper interest than even the most fascinating fictions;—fictions she did indeed occasionally read; but it was only in those seasons when the exhaustion of long-continued excitement in writing had rendered her incapable of close attention. The interests of reality were fast prevailing over those of the ideal world; her mind, every day more and more, needed the stimulus of an object, such as she could deem important; and it became indisposed to exertion, at the impulse of mere fancy, or personal feeling.

This marked change in her mind and habits of feeling, was evidently much promoted by the new scenes she witnessed, and the new friendships she formed in Cornwall. Before the time of her visit to Marazion, she had had too little opportunity of becoming acquainted with the sufferings and the wants of the poor. She knew by report the miseries and the vices of the real world; but her experience had scarcely presented to her any other evils than those sorrows of the heart, and of the imagination, which are either wholly creat

Digitized by Google

ed, or greatly aggravated by vacant and morbid sensibilities; and which, however interesting and amiable they may seem, are all more or less *seclusive*, if not selfish in their influence. Friendships—and literary friendships—and polished tastes, and the delights of fancy, and wit and criticism, are fine things; and where they exclude either frivolity or grossness, they are good things. But in a sound understanding, and a rightly disposed heart, they will sink in estimation, when we are called daily to administer relief to the common and real sufferings of human life. And perhaps the instances are very rare (if indeed such instances are at all to be found) in which an abounding and laborious zeal in works of mercy, exists in union with a strong relish for the pleasures of the imagination. Be this as it may, it was observable with my sister, that, in proportion as her mind admitted the paramount claims which the sufferings of those around us have upon our sympathy and our activities, she became less regardful of the gratifications of taste, and of the luxuries and sensibilities of the imagination, and more solicitous in all her engagements to pursue utility.

The two or three excellent persons at Marazion, whom my sister ever after thought it her happiness to have known, were distinguished by their christian zeal in every good work; and she at once admitted and cherished, in her own character, the influence of those solid qualities.

Digitized by Google

The tendency of her acquaintance with Methodism was also of the same kind. And while, as will be apparent from her letters, she was very far from being blind to the defects of that religious system, or converted to its peculiar opinions, she confessed herself to owe to it a new impression of some branches of christian feeling and duty.

Early in the year 1816, while still at Marazion, Miss Taylor commenced her contributions to the Youth's Magazine; which she continued, with few exceptions, to supply during the succeeding seven years. It was with the most extreme reluctance, and not without the urgent persuasion of those to whose advice she was accustomed to listen, that she yielded to the repeated request of the conductors of that publication, to write statedly for it. She dreaded the bondage which she felt such an engagement would bring her under; she dreaded, especially, lest the necessity of writing at stated times, whether or not she felt a spontaneous impulse and excitement, should induce the habit of prosing; or should impair that feeling of sincerity, simplicity, and genuine interest, with which, hitherto, she had always written; and without which, to write at all, she would have thought an abuse of her talent, and a presumption upon that degree of favor she had won. Happily, these objections were overruled; and soon finding herself successful, she felt a pleasure in the employment; and was incited to use her best exertions to improve, for the highest purposes, this

Digitized by Google

opportunity of addressing constantly so large a number of young persons.

To a writer whose invention is fertile, whose judgment and taste is matured, and who, above all, has too much self-respect to allow him to sink into inanity or frivolity, the necessity of writing at stated times, may be advantageous; for it is likely to produce, at once, freedom, and simplicity of style. Under such circumstances, that fastidiousness which would substitute lifeless proprieties for faulty beauties, must be laid aside:—a subject having once presented itself to the thoughts, must not be dismissed, merely because it seems unpromising; and the mind, by the very feeling of being tied to an *unpromising subject*, is roused to make an extraordinary effort. Thus, I well know, it often was with my sister:—and the result has been, that this collection of papers contains perhaps, her happiest and her most useful compositions.

The Essays in Rhyme on Morals and Manners, were finished in the spring of the year 1816. Miss Taylor never wrote any thing with so much zest and excitement, as the pieces composing this volume. While employed upon them, she was almost lost to other interests:—even her prevailing domestic tastes seemed forgotten; and in our daily walks, she was often quite abstracted from the scene around her.

In truth she had stepped upon ground new to herself; and felt an impulse which gave unwonted

Digitized by Google

vigor to her mind. Her impatience of pretension and perversity in matters of religion; and her piercing discernment of the deceptions of the heart, give a peculiar force and pungency to many passages in the Essays in Rhyme; while others are distinguished by the same interchanging pathos and playfulness, which had been displayed in her earlier writings A few lines, perhaps, in this volume may have seemed *too* pungent to some readers. This she fully anticipated; but would not shrink from the hazard. Her feelings, and her judgment, were averse to compromise, or to the timid concealment of opinions. Some such concealment had been recommended to her by a friend, to whom the manuscript had been submitted, previous to publication: in reply to these suggestions she says—

"It is now time to refer to a former letter of yours, respecting certain passages in the Essays in Rhyme. It is scarcely necessary to say, after having written them, that I do not agree with you, as to the propriety of total silence, on all disputed subjects. Had that plan been always pursued, what would now have been the state of the world! I am very far from blaming Mr. Cunningham for writing the Velvet Cushion (his doing it unfairly is another thing); and with regard to introducing particular sentiments in works of a general nature, it appears to me one of the best ways of doing it. Who ever blamed Mrs. More for poking the steeple into almost every page of her writings?

Digitized by Google

What happened to Miss Hamilton for making the hero of her novel a dissenter? or, which is more to my purpose, what has been the consequence of the severe sarcasms of Cowper upon the church and its ministers? The consequence is, indeed, that he is hated by the high-church party; but that does neither him nor his works any harm. What harm did he suffer from the review of his poems when they first appeared, by our old friend the Critical Review, when they said—'This is an attempt to be witty in very lame verse?' I grant it is probable that no proselytes have been gained to any party by what he wrote; but who will deny that the diffusion of the liberal sentiments that abound in his writings, has been of great service to the cause of truth and moderation? Do not suppose I am here placing myself by the side of Cowper;—I am only pleading against the system of observing a profound silence on all controverted subjects, in works of a general nature."

To some criticisms of a different kind she thus replies.—

"You will not be surprised, and I am sure you will not be offended, to see in how few instances I have availed myself of your criticisms, if you reconsider the nature of them;—that is, how very few were merely literary. To that few I paid every attention;—most of them had already been marked for correction, either by myself, or other critical friends; but I was disappointed to find so few of that description; and still more, to find so

Digitized by Google

many relating to matters of *opinion*, which you would hardly expect I should give up. I cannot guess why the very same opinions—or creed, if you please (for I know that is a word you are particularly fond of), which were, I believe, expressed with quite as much plainness in 'Display,' should offend you so much less there. You say, indeed, that you have only remarked upon that style of language which refers to a *party;* not to a *principle;* but on the contrary, I found not a single note upon those few passages in which I write as a dissenter. If you mean to call religious sentiment *party*, I shall not dispute the term with you. Christianity has had a great many ill names from its commencement to this day; but they have never done it the least harm, nor ever will. Do you think I would condemn you for using a prayer-book, or kneeling at an altar—for going under water; or even for wearing a broad brim? No. But as I would not make my creed narrower than that of the Bible, so I dare not make it wider. 'There is no other name under Heaven, whereby we must be saved:'—'He that believes shall be saved; he that believes not shall be damned.' This is all I would contend for, and all, I think, that I have contended for, as essential; and if it is to this you object, I fear not boldly to say that you are wrong. And my heart's desire and prayer is, that you may be led, as many a confident opposer has been, to what I must still maintain to be 'the only place—the feet of Jesus.'

Digitized by Google

"I think your prejudice—may I say your party spirit (for never does party spirit show itself so openly, or speak so narrowly as when it embraces the skeptical creed) has got the better of your good taste, in the present instance: your taste is good, when left to its free exercise; but in several of your criticisms I scruple not to say you have, under the influence of other feelings, betrayed a very bad one. Where, for instance, you object to passages that are simple quotations from the Bible. Here I can speak quite confidently, in a literary view, that the effect of such quotations is good; and that they confer a dignity on the verse. Where, for instance, I have introduced, almost literally, those passages—'In thy presence is fulness of joy,'—'In my father's house are many mansions'—I am sure that I am more classical than you, in your very ill-chosen remark upon them. That these expressions have been quoted a thousand times by 'Lady Huntingdon;' or 'Mr. Huntington,' cannot render them at all less affecting or sublime; and to call such language 'religious cant,' is in my opinion, irreligious cant."

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

LETTERS WRITTEN FROM CORNWALL.

TO MRS. W.

Marazion, June 20, 1814.

My dear Friend,

As this is one of our *Saint's days*, I cannot do better than devote it to my friends: one letter I have already despatched to Ongar; and I am sure it is quite time to address you, as I believe my last letter was written to inform you of our arrival at Ilfracombe, though I think the fault has not been all on my side. The interval has been pretty well filled with incidents:—S. and A. have not been idle:—you and the Prince Regent have been receiving company:—father and mother have left the Castle House:—we have removed to Marazion; and Bonaparte to Elba:—so that the world does not pay us the compliment of standing still till we have time to animadvert on its revolutions.

I would have waited a week or two longer, when I should have been better able to say how well we like our new situation, but that I hope this will now reach you before your friends leave you, as S. mentioned the last week in June for returning. To what is she returning?—I hope to a life of usefulness and happiness: I have never known one better fitted to enjoy and to adorn the

Digitized by Google

peaceful scenes of domestic life, than our dear S. Happy is he who is destined to be the companion of them!

I suppose by this time Mr. C. has been introduced to his little grandson, with whom I may safely venture to guess he is pleased. I enjoy for you, my dear friend, the pure and real pleasures of the nursery. I am thinking too anxiously of dear Ann. The wide distance that separates us increases this anxiety:—if I could be near her, I should feel comparatively little; but to wait a five or six days' post for such intelligence is what I dread. Yet He to whom we should cheerfully commit her, is "nigh at hand, and not afar off."

* * I told S. that we did not think of leaving Ilfracombe till August; but finding that, during the summer, it does not often happen that vessels from Cornwall put into Ilfracombe, we determined to avail ourselves of the first good opportunity:—we regretted that one offered so soon:—we had scarcely twenty-four hours' notice. But our little affairs were soon arranged, and at nine o'clock on the evening of the 9th, we set sail, and a mild breeze wafted us from our dear Ilfracombe. We were tolerably well till about the middle of the night, when a fresh gale sprang up, and from that time to the moment of our landing, at nine o'clock the following evening, we suffered continued sickness. We landed at St. Ives, and took lodgings there for a week: on Friday evening we reached this place, where we had

Digitized by Google

before engaged lodgings: they are not so pleasantly situated as those we occupied at Ilfracombe; but they are comfortable; and our hostess is a good woman, who takes pains to please us.

Marazion is pleasantly situated on the margin of Mount's Bay, which forms a fine sweep: on the western side lies Penzance, nearly opposite to us, at the distance of three miles:—it is a fine ride by the sea side. This morning we have been there: it is a large and very pleasant town; and being so near, we can have many of the conveniences it affords. The views here are open and agreeable: St. Michael's Mount is a fine object, distant about half a mile, and Penzance and the adjacent villages very prettily skirt the Bay. We were recommended here in preference to Penzance, as being milder; and it suits us better on account of its being more retired. In spite of our nonconformity we shall probably attend at the chapel of ease, at which Mr. —— now officiates, whose name I dare say you have heard. * * *

TO MISS E. M.

Marazion, Cornwall, July 2, 1814.

* * * The expectation of shortly leaving Ilfracombe, almost ever since I received yours, dated in April, made me defer writing from day to day, thinking I should soon be able to tell you where we were destined; but at last we went off so suddenly that we had scarcely time to arrange our own little affairs; and although I have felt

Digitized by Google

impatient to do so, I would not write immediately after our arrival here, that I might be better able to tell you how we like Cornwall. I have been sorry to hear that you are unwell, and I know that you do not complain of trifles. It is not surprising that, exchanging the pure air of Devon for such as you are now inhaling, your health should suffer. Although there is so little temptation to go abroad, you must not neglect daily exercise. It is not complimenting London air too much, to allow that it is better out of doors than in. I am not surprised that London makes you love Devonshire more than ever. The sight of it, especially after a considerable absence, never fails to make me low-spirited; and I scarcely know whether this is occasioned most by its *wretchedness*, or its *magnificence*. I entirely understand your affection for the old mulberry tree: there is a laburnum at Colchester which is quite as good a friend of mine. I saw it blossom sixteen springs; and plucked a spray when I took leave of it, thinking it would be a great pleasure to ruminate over it now and then, but I believe I have never found time to look at it yet: it has lain ever since undisturbed, amidst a variety of similar relics, which have been abandoned to the same neglect.

In consequence of strongly urged advice, we determined, early in the year, to remove to Cornwall during the summer months; for I could not summon courage to undertake the voyage on the approach of the autumnal gales. We had not

Digitized by Google

intended to leave Ilfracombe quite so soon; but a good opportunity offering, we availed ourselves of it, and after a passage more safe than agreeable, landed at St. Ives, from whence we crossed to this place; which has been recommended to us in preference to Penzance; and where we had already engaged lodgings.

I think you have not been so far in Cornwall; so I may tell you that we are very pleasantly situated on the margin of Mount's Bay, which forms a fine regular sweep, surrounded by sheltering hills. Penzance, a very handsome town, at the distance of three miles, is in full view; and with its adjacent villages, prettily skirts the bay. The surrounding country is open and cheerful—near Penzance, pleasantly wooded; and here and there are some shaded and rural spots. St. Michael's Mount, directly opposite to us, and accessible at low water, is the most striking object in the scene. We have not yet thoroughly explored it; but it is much finer and more picturesque than we had expected, from such views as we had seen of it. Altogether we are pleased with our situation; it is a complete contrast to the wild and solitary scenery of Ilfracombe. Being prone to form local attachments, I cannot at present decide impartially to which I should give the preference.

How long we shall sojourn in this land of strangers is quite uncertain. I feel with you, that I dare not look forward to distances I may never reach: and I too could think of next summer with

Digitized by Google

the delightful hope of again seeing many that are dear to me; but I am afraid of expecting it, or of forming any plan beyond to-day: by painful lessons I have learned that it is vain and dangerous to do so. Seldom perhaps till we have lived long enough to observe that the wishes we form for ourselves are either directly thwarted, or if indulged, that they wholly disappoint our expectation, are we sincerely disposed to say "Choose thou mine inheritance for me." When such wishes appear very moderate and limited—falling far short even of the common objects of worldly pursuit—when we ask neither for length of days, riches, nor honors; but only for some one favorite comfort, we are almost ready to expect that such a reasonable request will be granted; and it is well if we are taught, either by being disappointed *of* it, or *with* it, that eager desires for any thing short of the favor of God, are displeasing to Him, and injurious to ourselves: there is a sweet feeling of security in committing our future way to Him, with an entire dependance on his wisdom and goodness, and a cordial acquiescence in his appointments. * * *

TO MR. J. C.

Marazion, September 23, 1814.

* * * Now that you are so much a man of business I should really scruple to intrude upon you with four pages of *thoughts* and *reflections*, if I were not persuaded that there are frequent

Digitized by Google

moments when, in all respects essential to true friendship and friendly intercourse, you are what you were in times that are past. And as I feel it to be pleasant and refreshing to sit down and converse with you as we were wont, so I have no doubt you will still peruse the somethings or nothings that may escape from my pen with a kindred feeling. Months have passed since I wrote to you; and in the interval I have travelled a hundred miles further west, and seen many new places and faces: but this I can say (and I hope you will think it worth sending three hundred miles to tell you) that associating with strangers, so far from alienating my thoughts and affections from those I have long known and valued, attaches me still more to them. I am surrounded with those who know that I am—Miss Taylor; but know not that I am—"Jane;" and it sometimes makes me sigh for a renewal of intercourse with those who, for that simple reason, have yielded me an unmerited share of their regard. The many follies, infirmities, and deficiencies which are intimately known to them, may, it is true, be partially and for a time concealed from strangers; but yet, I would rather be with those who, "with all my faults, have loved me still." * * * * * * Nothing can be more tranquil and agreeable than the manner in which our time passes here: we are both sufficiently occupied to preserve us from dulness; nor do we need other relaxation than the pleasure of conversing with

Digitized by Google

each other in those hours of the day which we spend together. We have, however, some society here—more indeed than at Ilfracombe. I would gladly avoid the trouble of it; but I know it is good for me to be obliged to exert myself in conversation sometimes. * * *

* * * I do not think my attachment to nonconformity is likely to be at all shaken by my present circumstances; on the contrary, I long to attend "among my own people," and to worship in the simplicity of the gospel. Yet it is both pleasant and useful to associate with good people who differ from ourselves.

It is not from intention, but accident, that I am writing to you on this day of the month. You remember, I dare say, the advanced stage at which I am arrived:—at five and twenty I regretted the departure of youth; but now I am quite reconciled to being as old as I am. In looking back upon the past, nothing strikes me so forcibly, for future benefit, as the different sensations occasioned by a review of its *misfortunes*, and its *faults*. Upon seasons of care, anxiety, and distress, of which (though they have been comparatively few and light) I can remember some, I can reflect without a feeling of regret or uneasiness; indeed there is a kind of satisfaction and complacency in looking back upon scenes of suffering; while the mistakes, follies, and sins, that have marked my life, are sources of present and perpetual uneasiness. Of this, past experience and present

Digitized by Google

feeling tend increasingly to convince me, that, whatever afflictions may be appointed for me in future, if, in the course of the next ten or twenty years (should I see so many) I shall attain more holiness, I shall also enjoy more happiness, than in the years that are past. To do quietly the duties of *to-day*, without ambition, and without anxiety, is to ensure comfort;—and comfort is a word that suits better the present state than happiness; and in truth it is all that would be desired by us if our thoughts were familiar with death and eternity;—if we habitually remembered that the time is short—that all we are most interested about is passing away, and that the flower we best love fadeth. * * *

TO MISS E. M.

Marazion, May 31, 1815.

My dear Friend,

Although I quite forget the date of my last, I know that I have many times since felt much inclined to converse with you; and that I have not written before is only owing to the constant recurrence of some employment that is more immediately pressing, and whose plea is more readily admitted, because it is usually something that requires less exertion than writing, even to so kind and candid a friend as you, to whom I know the most simple expressions of regard are more agreeable than a studied epistle. Some people think it a great recommendation to be able to write a "clever letter;" but if there is any thing I dislike

Digitized by Google

to receive, or that I am unambitious of writing, it is a *clever* letter; by which I mean a letter that exhibits obviously an endeavor to be smart and pointed, or worse still—fine and sentimental. In this I am sure you will think with me. But to my languid mind, it is generally an effort to say any thing beyond how d'ye do; and therefore, I often delay the task in hope of an hour of vigor, till those who are oftenest remembered, might fairly imagine themselves forgotten: but now, though I am flat and chilly, and have more than half a head-ache, I am determined to spend the morning with you.

What you told me in your last letter, made me almost envy the situation of those to whom religion appears as a glorious *novelty*, and who embrace it with all the ardor, and gratitude, and joy, of a newly received message from heaven. They who, "from their childhood, have been taught the Holy Scriptures" have, no doubt, their advantages; but how liable are these advantages to be abused! It often happens, I believe, that persons who have been long familiar with the name of Jesus, as the sinner's friend, are shamed out of their coldness and negligence by the warmth and energy of those whose eyes are newly opened to behold him.

To inquiries, such as those which you make relative to your not having felt the strong convictions, and the overwhelming fears that many experience in the commencement of their religious course, I have heard the most judicious Christians

Digitized by Google

reply, that a holy walk with God, a humble consciousness of preferring Him, and his service, to any other thing, is a better and safer evidence of a real change of heart, than a reference to the most remarkable emotions of mind, at any particular time. The Bible does not specify any certain measure of terror, or any violent apprehensions of the Divine anger, as essential to true conversion.—"Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved," is its simple declaration; and as the evidence that we do believe, and that our repentance is genuine, we must "bring forth the fruits of righteousness." True sorrow for sin, flowing from a contemplation of Divine mercy, which is called in the Scriptures "a broken heart," is surely a more acceptable sacrifice than the most fearful apprehensions of Divine wrath.

I cannot pass over in silence your hint on the subject of church communion. Although it is nowhere mentioned as essential to salvation, yet the tender injunction of our Lord—"Do this in remembrance of me," is so forcible an appeal to our gratitude, that the neglect of it cannot be considered an immaterial circumstance. If the rules of a society, calling itself a church of Christ, are so strict as to present any real obstacle to a humble candidate, they must be unscriptural. And in some places, where a full written account of the candidate's religious history and feelings is made an *indispensable* condition of admission, *such rules are unscriptural:* though, even then, whether the

Digitized by Google

exaction should be considered as a real obstacle, is a serious question. In most cases, I believe, a private conversation with the minister, or a christian friend, is deemed sufficient; and whether so, or in writing, a simple and general profession of trust in the Lord Jesus, and of willingness to surrender heart and life to his service, is all that would be required. Many, no doubt, would be better pleased with a circumstantial experience; but I believe it is very rarely *demanded;* and I am sure it would not be by your present pastor. You know too, that what is communicated on such occasions is not heard or read by a whole congregation, but only by the members of the church; and that, in the absence of the candidate. The admission of a member is always considered as a pleasing and profitable, not an awkward or formidable service, by those who witness or are engaged in it. * * *

TO MRS. W.

Marazion, Sept. 19, 1815.

My dear Friend,

It is quite time to ask you how you do once again upon paper, though if you did but know it, I am very often making the inquiry in my thoughts. I have so many far distant and dear friends to think of now, that my thoughts are become quite expert at the business, and fly from Ongar to Rotherham, and from thence to Axminster, Bridport, or London, with wonderful ease and expedition. There was a passage in your

Digitized by Google

last letter, which brought old days so forcibly and suddenly to my recollection, that it made my tears overflow before I was aware. There is a long train of recollections, you know, connected with those days; but they are over and gone—all is settled, and well settled. For myself, as to external things, I was never so happy—I should rather say so comfortable (for that word best suits this world) as I am now. The last two years of my life have been so tranquil, so free from irritation, passed in a manner so suited to my taste and temper, with such a beloved and congenial companion—they have been so occupied with agreeable employments, and so enlivened at times by pleasant society, that I have often thought, should any thing occur to alter my present lot, I should look back upon it as the brightest spot in my life. —Ah well! I hope I am in some degree willing to commit the future to one who knows how to control it, and who will certainly prolong my present comfort if it is for my good.

I heard from ——— a little news, which did but serve to set off our perfect tranquillity to more advantage. * * *

* * * Oh what a world it is! Well indeed if we learn from such things to despise it in the right way, and to be looking towards a better country.

Digitized by Google

TO MISS M. H—E.

Marazion, October 16, 1815.

Your ceremonious commencement of our correspondence, my dear M. was so discordant with my feelings, at the moment of receiving your affectionate letter, that I determined to break through all restraint at once. But if you do not follow my example, I shall consider it as a signal for returning to the usual formality in the next.

Your kind letter was gratifying to me as a better evidence of real regard than the most elaborate epistle. I thank you for your many expressions of friendship. If I were conscious of having been a friend to you in every and the best sense, I should receive them with unmixed pleasure. I am, however, the more obliged for affection which must overlook so many deficiencies, imperfections, and infirmities, as a twelvemonth's intercourse has exhibited to your view. I say this, not as a flourish, but from the bottom of my heart. It was some time after your departure before I quite ceased to listen for the well-known step upon the stairs: for a few days I was miserably flat, and unable to take any interest in my employments. But I have by this time begun to be again sensible of the pleasures of regularity, and of the satisfaction of resting in some degree upon myself. This revival, however, is not accompanied by any diminution of regard towards those who are gone. The substantial pleasure of having *gained a friend*—of having one more heart

Digitized by Google

in this cold world with which I can feel sympathy, and from which I may expect it, remains. And as for the rest—the relief and recreation of frequent intercourse—it is a pleasure which, however desirable, may be cheerfully resigned, without at all impairing friendship; and which, indeed, might have been enjoyed independently of any feeling that deserves the name. * * *

TO MISS E. M.

Marazion, January 16, 1816.

* * * Here we are surrounded by Methodists; and have the opportunity of knowing what Methodism really is. We usually attend at their chapel: their preachers generally appear to be zealous and devoted men; and their preaching well adapted to be useful to the class of persons who are their hearers. I have never any where before seen so general a profession of religion; and there is every reason to believe it is more than a profession with many. A little romantic fishing town, just opposite to us across the bay, contains, we are told, a large society of experienced and fervent Christians; and it is the case with many of the forlorn, desolate looking villages in the neighborhood, that seem in all things else a century or two behind the rest of the world. * * * When one has been screwed up for some time with narrow-minded people, it is no small relief to meet with those of enlarged and liberal views; especially if their piety does not

Digitized by Google

suffer by their intelligence. But I am indeed much inclined to believe that the *poor* in every sense, the mentally poor, are generally the richest in faith—that they receive the gospel more simply *as it is*, without reasonings and disputings, and live upon it more entirely, and more happily. * * *

TO THE SAME.

Marazion, April 24, 1816.

* * * I am glad you have heard and were pleased with Mr. ——, and wish you knew him as a parlor companion:—one does not often meet with a person so completely intellectual.

Of Methodism and Arminianism, I knew scarcely more than the names before I came here, and am very glad of having seen them for myself. Cornwall certainly offers a favorable specimen of the Methodists: the good they have done is unquestionable, even by the most prejudiced witnesses. But what they have effected is fairly attributable to their zeal and laboriousness, rather than to their peculiar opinions. The ignorant poor, when they become pious, are so almost exclusively "taught of God"—they are so little encumbered with human knowledge, that I believe it makes very little practical difference indeed whether they are called Arminians or Calvinists. The same unerring Spirit guides the minds of both to all essential truth. But does it not seem that opinions are of more importance, and produce more decided effects in the more

Digitized by Google

cultivated? I think I have lately witnessed some such effects. An Arminian who is much interested in his peculiar views, unconsciously perhaps to himself, very sparingly and partially exhibits in his preaching the *good news* of the christian system:—he seems fearful of preaching a too free salvation for sinners. I am far from saying that this is the case generally with the Methodist preachers; but I am sure it was the case with the most zealous Arminian I ever heard or knew. But if peculiar opinions give a bias to the strain of preaching on one side, there can be no doubt that it does so in a much more baleful degree on the other. I would much rather, as I value my soul's safety, attend the preaching of an Arminian, than of a *high* Calvinist. I have heard a few of these preachers, and have seen and heard much of the effects of such doctrine among the common people. It is said to be just now a fast spreading evil among the evangelical clergy of the establishment; and it is spreading like a leprosy among the ignorant in all denominations. I believe there is scarcely any tendency towards it among the regular dissenting *ministers;* but some of their flocks are infected. There is something so flattering, and imposing, and *comfortable*, in the statements of preachers of this class, and the evil (except in avowed Antinomianism) is so much concealed, that it is no wonder the doctrine is eagerly embraced by those who wish for a cheap and indulgent way of getting to heaven; nor even

Digitized by Google

that many of the sincere and humble are led into the snare. If the accounts we hear are correct, it is not Towgood, but high Calvinism that has induced Mr. —— to leave the establishment:—it is said he objects especially to reading the Ten Commandments!

Having heard and seen so much of the evil tendency of these sentiments, I was very sorry to hear lately that they had found their way to——: at least what I heard led me to suppose that it was so:—it was said that Mr.——had lately professed that a great change had taken place in his views;— that he now perceived he had never before known or preached *the gospel;* and that the minds of many of his most pious hearers had, in consequence of this change, been very much unsettled; but that they were now falling into his views. Now though it would be wrong to judge upon this evidence alone, yet this is so precisely the language of the party, that one cannot but fear that the fact is as I have supposed.

* * * * Many of the people, I have no doubt, are so truly Christians that their own minds may sustain but little injury, and their lives continue as ornamental to their profession as before; but it is not probable that this will be the case with the majority. It is certainly a temptation to a young man to preach in that strain, for nothing will so certainly ensure popularity.

I am glad that so favorable a change has taken place at ——, and hope Mr —— may find some

Digitized by Google

judicious guide to direct his inquiries; though if he is indeed inquiring, he will doubtless be directed well at last. I have lately read an excellent paper on Hyper-calvinism, explaining some causes of its growth, and especially tracing it to a backwardness on the part of many professedly evangelical ministers in introducing the grand truths of the gospel; so that their hearers, having real cause of complaint, readily run to the opposite extreme.

You have indeed been led to the true, the only way of solving your difficulties on some of the deeper doctrines of religion. Every attempt to explain them has, to me, always rather increased than removed the difficulty, and my own discouragement. But certainly I should not fly to *Arminianism* in order to escape from it. This system may indeed seem to remove the difficulty a step further off; but there it meets us again, just the same as before, unless the omnipotence and omniscience of God be disputed. But let us wait:—it is but a little while and we shall comprehend something of the depths of the wisdom and knowledge of God; though now "unsearchable and past finding out." How chilling are the very terms of controversy, and how unlike the language of the Bible! To live near to God, to walk humbly with Him, is the surest way of having our minds satisfied on these points. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him: He will show them His covenant." * *

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIII.

VISITS—RESIDENCE AT ONGAR, AND AT HASTINGS.

The consequences of the great and long sustained excitement occasioned by writing the Essays in Rhyme, upon my sister's health and spirits, were such as seemed to render change of scene, and complete relaxation, necessary. She therefore determined to spend some part of the ensuing summer in Yorkshire. We left Marazion in the month of June, 1816; and after an agreeable journey of a week, reached Masbro' near Rotherham, where Mr. Gilbert then resided. This visit afforded the most delightful and beneficial relaxation to her mind, by yielding her both the lively enjoyments of a renewed intercourse with those most dear to her; and the pleasures of an introduction to the very intelligent and agreeable society of that neighborhood.

Six weeks were thus pleasantly passed in Yorkshire: in August we returned to Ongar, after an absence from home of nearly three years. In this interval my father had left the Castle House, and removed to a farm-house a short distance from the town: with this house, and its garden, my sister was delighted, and felt the highest pleasure —a pleasure altogether congenial with her character, in being once again in seclusion, with those

Digitized by Google

she most loved. Her feelings in this return home are described in a letter of this date:—

TO MISS A. M.

Ongar, Aug. 28, 1816.

* * * Your welcome letter found me at Sheffield, and arrived when I was in a party of agreeable friends; but I gladly stole away for a short time to give it a hasty perusal, reserving for the first leisure hour a more careful one. It was indeed welcome, and truly gratifying to me, my dear friend; and for all the kindness it breathes, I thank you sincerely. But why have you neglected to fulfil your promise of telling me something of yourself—body and mind? I can only gather from one expression, that you have been unwell; but to what extent, I am left to conjecture. Do not fail in this respect again; but remember what I have often told you, that the surest way of making your letters interesting, is to let them contain particulars respecting yourself. I shall be severely punished indeed for having made "Egotism" the subject of one of my "Rhymes," if it should influence any of my friends to refrain from those communications, on which the interest of a friendly correspondence entirely depends. In truth, I have found it one of the inconveniences attendant upon making one's opinions public (and I assure you these inconveniences are not few) that others are apt to suppose one is always on the watch for those failings that have been cen-

Digitized by Google

sured; or that the censure or raillery was directed against some individual. I assure you it is much more from a knowledge of my own heart, than from observation on the failings of others, that I have been impelled to write on the subjects I have chosen.

I wish this fine morning I could take a turn with you in your pleasant garden, and talk instead of write; or rather, if wishing were of any avail, I would wish that you could take a turn with me in mine, which I think you would enjoy. I must however, tell you something of our movements. We staid a fortnight longer with Ann than we proposed; the time passed pleasantly, and we were unwilling to part. I think, however, you, who know my taste for retirement, and my dislike of general company, would have pitied me if you had seen the continued bustle of visiting with which my time was occupied. The contrast with our mode of life at Marazion was as great as it could be: perhaps the total change of scene was what I needed.

On the 13th of August we left Rotherham, and in a few days reached our dear paternal home, after an absence of three years. It was indeed a joyful meeting; and when, that evening, we once more knelt around the family altar, I believe our hearts glowed with gratitude to Him who had permitted us thus to assemble in peace and comfort, and had disappointed all our fears. Here we are again in complete retirement; and a

Digitized by Google

sweeter retreat I do not wish for. We are nearly a mile from the town, and surrounded with the green fields. The house is an old fashioned place, with a pretty garden, which it is the delight of my father and mother to cultivate; at the door is a rural porch, covered with a vine. Here we are rarely interrupted by any one; and although only twenty miles from the great world, we enjoy the most delightful seclusion. The rooms are large and pleasant, and the whole has exactly that rural air which we all so much admire. * * *

During this visit at home, Jane and her mother projected a work to be executed conjointly, in the form of a correspondence between a mother and her daughter, at school. These letters were commenced at Ongar, and completed at Hastings, where we passed the whole of the following winter. The composition of her part of these letters, together with her stated contributions to the Youth's Magazine, furnished her with just so much literary employment at Hastings, as was consistent with her health, which had materially suffered by the too great exertion she had made the preceding winter. She now devoted a much larger proportion of her time to reading, than at any former period. The usual consequence of much reading she soon felt and regretted; namely, a great indisposition to the exertion necessary for writing. And, indeed, after this time, she never again surrendered herself fully to the excitement necessary for productive efforts of the mind.

Digitized by Google

The months passed at Hastings, were passed in complete seclusion from society:—it was, however, to my sister an agreeable winter; for though she could relish the pleasures of general society, when they came in her way; they were what she never sought or wished for, when deprived of them: and, of the society of her dearest friends, she had long been accustomed to be deprived With the pleasures of regular employment, books and fire-side comforts, she was ever satisfied and delighted. Writing to her sister from Hastings, she says:—

"We have had a peaceful, comfortable winter: all I have wanted to make it as comfortable to me as formerly, was the same interesting employment. In the prospect of returning to Ongar, I feel keenly the pleasantness of the situation, and the affection of my family. The former is much more to me than you would imagine from what you saw of me in a much finer country. There is a composure of mind, and freedom from excitement, which is essential to my enjoyment of the country; and its being then the time of the Essays coming out, together with all the bustle and variety, totally destroyed that composure; but I can truly say—

'I would not for a world of gold,
That nature's lovely face should tire.'

And though the time of romance is over, I rejoice to feel in myself an increasing capability of intellectual pleasure. Excuse me, dear Ann,

Digitized by Google

for this pure egotism, and for reflections which, to you, surrounded by so many pressing realities, must seem trivial. But to none of my married friends, except you, can I write of my own interests, without feeling that I am intruding upon theirs. I feel, in writing to them, that they are married. But I except you, dear Ann, not only because you are a kind sister; but because you retain the enthusiasm of other days:—you are not hardened and blunted by the world."

The leisure enjoyed by my sister at Hastings was employed in maintaining intercourse with her friends.

TO MISS M. H—E.

Hastings, December 10, 1816.

If you knew the glow of pleasure and affection with which I take up my long-neglected pen, every suspicion of neglect which my silence may have occasioned would be dispelled. I know of few things that would give me greater pleasure than your taking a place at our new fire-side; and as the best substitute for that unattainable pleasure, I do hope you will, as soon as compatible with your engagements, let me receive another of your interesting, and ever-welcome epistles. * * * * * Here we are enjoying as much comfort as I expect in this world. Our lodgings are pleasanter than those we occupied at Marazion. We are close to the sea; and all the

Digitized by Google

rooms command a full view of it. Hastings, however, affords by no means the quiet seclusion which we there enjoyed. In summer, of course, it is crammed with Londoners; and even through the winter many families remain; so that the walks, though very picturesque, are continually invaded. * * *

I think my last was written from Sheffield. We soon after took a painful leave of our dear sister; and returned, after three years' absence, to Ongar. Oh, what a pleasure it was to be welcomed by kind parents to a *home!* Nothing could exceed their kindness and indulgence all the time we were there; and after so long an interval, we knew how to value this affection. They thought me not looking well; and it has been my dear mother's constant business to nurse me up again during my stay. Our house stands alone in a pretty country: it is an old farm house—more picturesque than splendid, and therefore it suits both our tastes and our fortunes. I enjoyed exceedingly the three quiet months we spent there: all my love of nature returned in a scene so well adapted to excite it; and it was delightful to see our dear father and mother enjoying, in their declining years, so peaceful a retreat, and wishing for no other pleasures than their house and garden, and their mutual affection afford.

Although I have dwelt so long upon our affairs and adventures, I must a little longer continue the same strain, to thank you for the generous and

Digitized by Google

candid praise you have bestowed upon my last volume. I do assure you that the sensible and sincerely expressed approbation of the friends I love is far more gratifying to me than that of a world of strangers: and from *you* I feel especially pleased to receive this approbation; because the book contains some lines with which you must be so far from pleased, that nothing but genuine liberality could enable you to judge favorably of the remainder. I would that my spirit were as catholic as yours! * * *

TO MISS E. M.

Hastings, March 7, 1817.

* * * As I feel obliged to my friends for remembering me ever, I do not complain, though I may regret a long silence. Of all things I dread having to do with *affrontable* people; and therefore have always endeavored to avoid this disposition myself. Besides, as, in the present instance, I am chargeable with a long silence, I have no right to find fault with you. That feeling of self-importance which leads one to make a large demand upon the recollections and attentions of friends is gradually cured by time and experience, if not by good sense and reflection: and altogether it is, I hope, pretty well damped in me. For a few weeks during the last summer, I felt much pleasure in the thought of being once more within reach of you; but that plan was abandoned, and I have now little expectation of

Digitized by Google

seeing North Devon again. It is a country I shall always remember with interest, both on account of the friends I found there, and because it was the first romantic country I had ever seen; and that first vivid impression is such as will never be effaced. I am glad however that my North Devon friends are not *fixtures*, like its hills. * * * *

I am sorry to hear of the unpleasant circumstances at ——. People will never understand that it is not religion, but *irreligion* that causes these mischiefs. If "the children of God are peace-makers," surely the breakers of peace cannot claim Him for their Father. I remember Miss ——, and she was what you describe. I knew one in still humbler life at —— of the same sort. She was a servant in the house we occupied there for a few months;—a methodist, and of such slender abilities that she could rarely understand a common order, till it had been repeated once or twice: yet she was indeed "wise unto salvation." Her conversation (perfectly unaffected and unassuming) was, on religious subjects, enlightened and edifying. Her plain face beamed till it was beautiful with christian love and peace. I remember her with affection and respect. How strange it seems that in christian societies so few should be found who thus "*adorn* the doctrine they profess in all things." Nothing is more discouraging than such a state of things. But, in one sense, we have nothing to do except with our-

Digitized by Google

selves. If our own lamps be not burning, we might find better employment than to lament the lukewarmness of others.

How strange that those who know they must die, should ever feel indifferent about the future world! It is one of the strongest marks of a depraved nature—one of the greatest wonders of the present state. I have sometimes thought that more might be done than is commonly attempted in education, to familiarize the idea of death to the minds of children, by representing it as the grand event for which they are born; and thus making a future state the object of their chief interest and ambition: perhaps something more might be done;—but after all, we know and feel, that nothing but the mighty power of God can overcome the earthliness of the mind, and give it the discernment of things spiritual. * * *

TO MISS A. M.

Hastings, March 18, 1817.

* * * This fine weather reminds me strongly of Marazion. I look at the sea, and sometimes fancy I am on the shores of Mount's Bay; and sometimes wish myself on board one of the vessels we see passing down channel, which might in a few hours convey me to those from whose society I am separated. But though this may not be, the time is fast coming when there will be only a dark river to pass, in order to unite us. The indistinct ideas we have of the unseen world,

Digitized by Google

render it difficult to derive so much pleasure from such thoughts as they are fitted to yield. Yet when we recollect how soon this fearful stream must be forded, it is surprising that we can feel deep interest in any thing beside. But alas! our eyes are beclouded, and not so much by the fears of death, as by the cares and interests of life; at least it is thus with me. The longer we live, the more we see of the weakness, deceitfulness, and vanity of our hearts, and of the inefficiency of outward circumstances to rectify these inward, deep-rooted evils. I used to think, when I was more exposed to the common snares of the world than I have lately been, that if I were but completely secluded from it, I should find it comparatively easy to make progress in the divine life. But I have had the most humbling proofs that the evil lies within. * * *

TO MISS M. H—E.

Hastings, March 18, 1817.

* * * Since I have been here I have looked back with more regret than ever to the short season of my intimacy with you. Until within a few days, I have not conversed with a human being since I came to Hastings, except my brother and the people of the house. The dissenting minister of the chapel died very soon after we came here; since that time there has been no minister settled at the place. We have generally attended at church. Mr. ——, whom I mention-

Digitized by Google

ed to you, has preached, during the winter, in both churches: they have been unusually crowded, and much attention has been excited, at least among the common people; the higher classes complain of his Methodism: he preaches with much earnestness and faithfulness; and it is to be hoped will do good. * * *

I was sure, my dear friend, before your last letter convinced me of it, that, in your present solitude and banishment from external excitements, your mind would grow, and your graces brighten. So that when you are restored to the pleasures of society, you will be prepared to meet its dangers. Ah! it is easier to "keep the heart with all diligence" amongst common, than amongst interesting people, is it not? That the seat of the evil, however, is not in the world without, but in the heart, I have the fullest conviction. It may be wise, indeed, to fly from outward temptations; but if this is all, we do much too little. The experience I have had of life, and of my own heart, renders me (at least in times of sober reflection,) increasingly indifferent with respect to future events. There is certainly this great advantage in having tried several different modes of life, that one can ascertain in what degree circumstances tend to influence the character, and affect the happiness. I have been placed in situations, such as I should have imagined, some years ago, would have made me extremely happy; and now I know that nothing *external* can do this. And

Digitized by Google

though there are enjoyments that I have not tried, yet I see others in the possession of them, and I observe in them the appearances of dissatisfaction. Thus I endeavor to check the inquiry which we are all so ready to make—"Who will show me any good?" It is easier even to repress this inquiry, than to conclude the verse with sincerity —"Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me, and that shall put more joy in my heart."

Have you ever met with any of Madame de Staël's writings? I have just been reading *Corinne ou l'Italie*, and have been so deeply interested that it seems as though I had gained a new friend. It gives a striking description of Italy: —as a *novel*, though of deep interest, it is in some respects faulty. But the profound reflections with which it abounds—displaying the most intimate acquaintance with the human heart, and the most just and elevated taste for nature, and the fine arts, form its distinguishing merit. She is said to be, and I can believe it to be just, the first female writer in Europe. You may judge how much the book interested me when I tell you that, lazy as I am, I made many pages of extracts from it. I have however, had forbearance enough not to read another novel of hers which is in the library here; for indeed, I have felt the enervating effects upon the mind of reading in succession several works of the lighter class. I have, however, with the one exception mentioned, abstained from novels: but too much poetry produces

Digitized by Google

an effect of the same kind, and I have lately been taking *tonics;* that is, reading Robertson's histories of Scotland, and of Charles V. I am now reading the life of Mrs. Carter, in which, though there is much *literary trifling*, which is to me extremely disagreeable, yet I find what repays one for the perusal. I think you would be pleased with it, as her taste and talents were so much of your order.

Do not be discouraged with regard to your qualifications for teaching, because you find the work laborious, and your pupils sometimes incorrigible. I believe it is your *fort.* But your being "apt to teach," cannot always make your scholars apt to *learn.*

It was mere forgetfulness at the time, that I did not give you the history of the Lascars, and of the interesting wreck which happened a few days after you left us. I fully intended to do so, but forgot it when I next wrote, and now it is too much out of date. Poor Andrew, the sick stranger, remained three months under the care of Miss M. She was entirely the means of restoring him to life; and she sent him away completely equipped by her own hand. * * *

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XIV.

RETURN TO ONGAR.—RELIGIOUS FEELINGS.

In April of the following year, we left Hastings; and Miss Taylor spent some weeks with her friends, in and near London; after which she once more returned to Ongar. It was about this time that she first perceived an induration in the breast, which continued, during the following years of her life, to hold her in a state of constant apprehension, and at length proved fatal.

My sister's religious comfort had been, for some time, gradually increasing; while the pensiveness and diffidence of her temper seemed to give way to the influence of matured judgment, and confirmed principle. Her religious belief had long been settled; but she had failed to apprehend, with comfort to herself, her own part in "the hope set before us in the gospel." It was at length, rather suddenly, in the summer of the year 1817, that the long standing doubts of her personal religion were dispelled; and she admitted joyfully the hope of salvation. The consequence of this change in her feelings was her making that public profession of faith in Christ which is required of His disciples. The extreme reserve of her temper, as well as her want of religious comfort, had hitherto withheld her from this explicit profession; now however, these reluctances

Digitized by Google

gave way; and, in October 1817, she became a member of the Christian church at Ongar, under the pastoral care of her father.

Her own account of this transaction occurs in a letter addressed to her sister, written a few months afterwards.—

"My mother told you of my having joined the church. You may have supposed that I was frightened into it, by my complaint; but I feel thankful that this was not the case; for it was not till after I had consulted Mr. Clyne, that I felt any alarm about it; nor had I before, any idea of its being of a formidable kind. My mind, all the summer, had been much in the state it has been in for years past, that is, unable to apply the offer of the gospel to myself; and all confusion and perplexity, when I attempted to do so. One evening (about three weeks before going to London for advice), while alone in my room, and thinking on the subject, I saw, by an instantaneous light, that God would, for Christ's sake, forgive my sins:—the effect was so powerful that I was almost dissolved by it.* I was unspeakably happy; I believed that had I died that moment

* It scarcely seems necessary to caution the young reader against a misinterpretation of these expressions. Nothing *preternatural* was supposed by my sister in this instance to have taken place. She simply means that the gloom or confusion of mind which had long distressed her, was suddenly dispelled by a more just view of the great truths of Christianity. Her temperament was very far from being that of the enthusiast; and none who knew her would impute to her a tendency to indulge illusory religious excitements.

Digitized by Google

I should have been safe. Though the strength of the emotion soon abated, the effect in a great degree remained. A fortnight afterwards, I told Isaac what had taken place, and he urged me to be proposed immediately to the church. It was in this state I went to London; and when I heard what was to me wholly unexpected, I could not but consider the change in my feelings as a most kind and timely preparation for what, but a few weeks before, would have overwhelmed me with consternation and distress. As it was, I heard it with great composure; and my spirits did not at all sink till after I returned home. Since then I have had many desponding hours, from the fear of death. The happiness I enjoyed for a short time has given place to a hope, which, though faint, secures me from distress."

Soon afterwards Miss Taylor accepted an invitation from a beloved friend at Reading, to pass the winter there: she also spent some weeks with her kind relatives at Oxford. She left Reading early in the following spring, and after spending a month near London, once more returned to Ongar. During this winter, the symptoms of the disorder above mentioned became more specific and alarming:—she had before received the advice of eminent surgeons in London; and at Reading, she was daily under the care of a very highly esteemed medical friend, whose anxiety for her recovery could not have been greater had she been his daughter. This gentleman (father of the

Digitized by Google

friend with whom she was a visiter) interdicted to her, absolutely, all literary labors; indeed she had now begun to feel the excitement of composition to be directly injurious to her health; and after this time she wrote only occasionally, and at distant intervals.

The summer of the year 1818, was a season of severe and continued sickness in our family. In turns Jane herself, one of her brothers, and her father, were confined for several weeks, by dangerous illness. In her anxiety for those dear to her, she so much forgot herself, that her own alarming complaint seemed quiescent; and in the autumn, when family comfort was pretty well restored, she appeared to look more cheerfully upon life than lately she had been wont to do; and consented that arrangements should be made for increasing her comfort at home. With this view she once more fitted up a study, to which she became as strongly attached as to any one she had occupied.

Believing herself to be now likely to remain at Ongar, she actively engaged in works of Christian charity. During a former abode at her father's house, she had originated a ladies' working society, for the benefit of the poor; and to the meetings of this society she gave her attendance whenever she was at home. She became also a constant, and most laborious teacher in the Sunday school; and continued to be so long after it was apparent that the exertion exceeded

Digitized by Google

her strength. It was in the sedulous and affectionate instruction of the children of her own class that alone she delighted; and so far was she from assuming any right of direction over her fellow teachers, that she retreated, as much as possible, from the precedence which would have been yielded to her:—doing less, perhaps, in matters of general direction, than she might have done with propriety.

My sister was in nothing an enthusiast;—she was not therefore supported through the fatigues and discouragements that attend these laborious duties, by those ardent feelings, or sanguine hopes, which often aid the benevolent activity of young persons. The reverse was too much the case; and whenever good appeared to result from her labors, it seemed to take her by surprise. Nor were her early habits, or her tastes, in unison with exertions of this sort: but whatever she did of this kind, was done simply from a full and strong conviction of the obligation of Christians, not "to please themselves," but to be "always abounding in the work of the Lord."

The influence of principle over her mind became still more conspicuous when she was called to take her part in promoting the objects of the Bible Society, in her neighborhood. For those business-like forms, and that publicity which seem inseparable from the conduct of this, and similar institutions, were peculiarly in opposition, if not to her judgment, at least to her habits and

Digitized by Google

her feelings; yet when she was convinced that it was not practicable fully to attain the important ends of the society by silent and unconnected exertions, she submitted to the apparent necessity of the case, and took her part in associations and committees.

Besides the attention bestowed on the children of her class on the Sunday, Miss Taylor instructed them in writing and arithmetic, one afternoon in the week. Labors of this kind were agreeable to her, because she found in them (what is needed by minds devoid of enthusiasm), a direct and perceptible benefit resulting from her exertions.

During this period my sister wrote fewer letters than she had been wont to do; yet dropped none of her epistolary connexions. The following letters belong to the time of which I am speaking:—

TO MISS S. G.

Ongar, Aug. 23, 1817.

My dear S.

When I heard of your being suddenly summoned to attend your brother, I felt an immediate desire to write to you, not from the idle expectation that I could say any thing to lessen your uneasiness; but from a feeling of true sympathy which similarity of circumstances awakened. I asked for your address when I wrote to Ann, but was still dubious whether to trouble you with a letter, when the arrival of yours quite determined me. I thank you for it, and I thank you still more for finding any pleasure in writing to me, and for

Digitized by Google

the assurances of your kind recollections. They are, I assure you, acceptable. I have learned to value a little *love*, more than many times the quantity of *praise;* and when I receive expressions of affection from any one who, I know, in some degree understands me, and who has had opportunity of observing many of my faults, I feel both obliged and *comforted.*

I was truly glad to hear a better account of your brother's health. I think you cannot yet have felt more desponding than I have formerly done about my brother: for a considerable time I was quite persuaded that he could not recover; and whenever I allowed myself to entertain any hope, I felt all the time a secret conviction that it was wilful flattery. Yet now—I would say it with thankfulness—he is so far recovered as to remove all immediate anxiety. I know not whether there is any thing encouraging to you in this; —but it *is* encouraging to know that the same Almighty Friend who spoke the healing word in one case, can do so in another; and assuredly *will*, if it be really desirable. He who is "the same yesterday to-day and for ever," still regards the prayers and tears of a sorrowing sister. I used very often to say—"Lord, if thou art here my brother shall not die;" and I used to try to add—"thy will be done;" and if ever I can say this with sincerity, it is when I take pains to reflect on the wisdom and goodness of God; and think how *certainly* what He does is best. And

Digitized by Google

even with respect to the spiritual interests of beloved friends, where certainly acquiescence in disappointment is most difficult (perhaps in this world impossible) even in this case, there is great consolation in recollecting, that the Judge of all the earth will do right. We are not more benevolent or more compassionate than He; and it is with this simple persuasion that I find it easiest to repel those hard and rebellious thoughts of God, which certain passages to which you allude are so apt to excite. We may be sure, that if we put any construction upon them that is in any way injurious to the Divine character in our minds, it is—it must be a false construction. I think there is greater encouragement to pray for the salvation of those dear to us, than for any thing—except our own. There are indeed many instances of the prayer of faith being answered at last in such cases; but it should be the prayer of *faith;* not a desponding, distrustful prayer; "When ye ask, *believe* that ye shall receive, and ye shall have."

I do not know whether your removal to —— was agreeable to you or otherwise. Your attachment to —— was, I believe, *local*, and one may suffer in parting from places, as well as from persons. I know you must regret the beautiful scenery you have left; especially as all you have thought and felt in that period of life when the thoughts are most lively, and the feelings most keen, is inseparably associated with it. There the illusions of youth

Digitized by Google

have been cherished; and whatever scenery may surround you when they begin to fade, it will inevitably appear less enchanting.

I am so perfectly acquainted with the whole history and mystery of the feelings you describe, that you need not expatiate on that subject. Madame de Staël, who seems to have felt every thing that a susceptible mind can feel in this world, has some admirable passages on that very subject:—in the prospect of quitting society of a certain kind, she says,—

"Il me semblait que j'entrerais en possession de l'univers le jour où je ne sentirais plus le souffle desséchant de la mediocrité malvaillante." Again:—"On est honteux des affections fortes devant les ames legéres: un sentiment de pudeur s'attache à tout ce qui n'est pas compris—a tout ce qu'il faut expliquer—à ces secrets de l'ame enfin, dont on ne vous soulage qu'en les devinant." Again:—"C'est en vain qu'on se dit, tel homme n'est pas digne de me juger;—telle femme n'est pas capable de me comprendre:—le visage humain exerce un grand pouvoir sur le coeur humain; et quand vous lisez sur ce visage une disapprobation secrete elle vous inquiete toujours, en depit de vous même; enfin, le circle qui vous environne finit toujours par vous cacher le reste du monde."

I have not given these extracts to fill up my letter, but because I thought they would please you; though perhaps it is necessary to be some-

Digitized by Google

what acquainted with her style fully to enter into them.

After all, a little—or perhaps a great deal of christian humility is the best antidote to the uncomfortable feelings generated by mixing with society either above or beneath one; and the simple desire to do others good will dissipate in a moment a thousand unfavorable feelings.

Do not suppose I am in your debt in affectionate thoughts and agreeable recollections of the hours we spent together; and believe me to be very affectionately your friend.

TO MRS. G.

Reading, January 20, 1818.

My dear E.,

I have indeed longed to tell you how much I have felt for and with you, since I heard of your severe illness; and being myself at the time the account reached me considerably indisposed, and in low spirits about my complaint, I felt a peculiar sympathy with you, thinking it probable that, after being so many years connected in intimate friendship here, we might in a very short time recommence our intercourse in another world. However this may be, we may each of us feel persuaded that it cannot be many years before we enter that world.—That we should either of us see old age is improbable. O that this quickening thought might have its due influence!

I have still occasional pain, which keeps alive anxiety; but on the whole my spirits are pretty

Digitized by Google

good. I endeavor to cast *this* care on God; and especially to impress my mind with the consideration that, even if my most sanguine hopes of recovery should be realized, it would make no *essential* difference in my prospects. There is no cure for *mortality*. Attention and supreme regard to my eternal interests is absolutely necessary, independent of all immediate considerations. Yet I feel the use—the benefit of this perpetual monitor, and pray that its voice may not be heard in vain; for after all, the most threatening afflictions are vain, unless the Spirit of God makes them the means of good to us. This too I have strikingly experienced. But how encouraging, under all discouragements, is that simple promise—"Ask and ye shall receive;" especially when we reflect that God, "who cannot lie," *has given it to each of us*. This may encourage us to ask, not only for salvation from the wrath to come, or for just grace enough to save us at last, with which it would be easy to be contented; but for great spiritual blessings—eminent spirituality of mind—"a life hid with Christ in God," so as to have at last "an abundant entrance into the kingdom of God." * * *

TO MISS E. M.

London, May 20, 1819.

* * * I am come to London for a few days to execute some home commissions. These fine showers that are making the hills and vales

Digitized by Google

rejoice, are making London more dreary than usual; and they confine me to a dull apartment, where, in rather lower spirits than are common to me, even in London, I sit down in perfect solitude to seek your distant society: my brother is out for the whole day on business. Solitude in the country is sweet; but in London it is forlorn indeed. So you see all things conspire to make this a very animated composition.

My health has not been so good this spring as during the past winter and summer: for this there is "a needs be." But though I believe these continual warnings to be good and necessary; yet *fear* seems to have an unfavorable influence upon my mind; inasmuch as I am to suspect the genuineness of prayer that is rendered more fervent than usual by an apprehension of danger. I feel regret unspeakable in looking back upon those past years of health and vigor that were devoted to self-pleasing. And yet is there not "all consolation," and consolation *for all* in the unqualified offers of the gospel, and in the simplicity of its declarations?—"Daughter, be of good cheer, thy sins which are many are forgiven thee:"—what needs one more than this;—and surely nothing less will do—not at least for those who are obliged by some threatening disease to realize their own mortality, and to look at eternity, as those who are in sound health cannot see it. In comparing the temperature of my feelings with yours, I was discouraged; yet I know that religion does not

Digitized by Google

alter the constitution of the mind, any more than that of the body. In you, ardent and energetic; in me, languid and phlegmatic, it would never assume the same appearances. They however are doubtless the happiest Christians the constitution of whose minds is the most favorable to the *life* of religion. But I feel that these considerations will not serve as an excuse for me, seeing that "God is able to make all grace abound to us also."

Monday morning.

I heard yesterday three good sermons. * * * * * * That in the evening by a plain methodist preacher; the best I thought of the three—that is, the most to the grand purpose of preaching. Why do not we hear such sermons oftener? Some ministers appear to be under an unaccountable infatuation, as if they were afraid or ashamed to come to the point;—as if every subject connected with religion were to be discussed in preference to that which is the foundation of all;—as if they would rather direct their hearers to any surrounding objects than immediately to "The Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world." How little do they consider the disappointment they occasion to those of their congregations who go, sabbath after sabbath, hungering for "the bread of life"—who need the consolations of the Gospel! * * *

Digitized by Google

TO MISS M. H—E.

Ongar, June 7, 1819.

If the frequency of my letters bore any proportion to the value I set upon yours, I am sure, my dear friend, you would be weary both of them and of me. Never, since the days of romance were over with me (or perhaps I might date a little later than that) never since the termination of a correspondence of unusual private interest, has letter-writing been in itself easy or agreeable to me;—though, as a means of maintaining friendship with the few I love, I value it as highly as ever. It was extremely easy to write at that period of life when "realities appeared as dreams, and dreams as realities." O the sheets I have despatched about absolutely nothing! It is easy, at any time, to write when interesting facts are to be related, and when hopes and fears are keeping the mind in perpetual agitation. But this is rarely the case during the greater part of our course. When the current of life is seen near its rise—sparkling amid rocks and hills, and meandering through flowery recesses, it is entertaining enough to trace its windings; but when it has reached the plain, and glides in a broad and even channel for many a mile, though its incessant flow towards the boundless ocean may afford subject for pensive reflection, there is little to invite description.

Thus I often contemplate my own course;—the illusions of youth are completely over:—I think

Digitized by Google

there are no circumstances that could now cheat me into a belief that life is, or could be, very different from what I now see it to be. I might indeed be more busy; and so have less leisure and inclination to moralize about it; but this would not alter the case. "Then I saw that this also is vanity"—is the confession that must be extorted from every heart, as one scheme of happiness after another has had its trial. Perhaps it was after some similar experience that David said—"I shall be *satisfied* when I awake in thy likeness." When we have felt that nothing else can satisfy the mind, then we are constrained to look to the fountain of happiness. * * * * * * * * * It is not strange that the wicked should go on in their wickedness; but is it not strange that those who know any thing of religion should not adorn it more? This is the discouragement. Yet perhaps there are many "hidden ones," who, unknown to their fellow Christians, are living near to God, while those who stand foremost in the church are content "to follow Christ afar off." * * * * * * * I rejoice to hear from a mutual friend that you are actively engaged in doing good. There is something stimulating in reading Paul's salutations to the good women of his acquaintance;—he evidently singles out those for especial notice who were most active and zealous in good works—"Priscilla, his helper in Jesus Christ"—"Mary, who bestowed much labor on

Digitized by Google

them"—"Phebe, a succourer of many:"—While we may imagine that his more general remembrance—"To all the saints that are with you"—refers to others, a little resembling those modern professors of Christianity of whom charity is bound "to hope all things." How pleasant and cheering is it to look at the few who are not of this doubtful character; and how delightful when those who are most dear to us give us this pleasure. * * * * * * * * This increase of piety in our dearest friends is *real prosperity;* and when we think prosperity of any other kind very desirable, we forget ourselves, and view the world with the worldling's eye. * * *

TO MRS. W. (MISS E. M.)

Ongar, Sept. 14, 1819.

* * * I truly rejoice with you in the happiness of seeing another of those most dear to you "walking in the truth." There is indeed no greater joy than this. *This is family prosperity.* How weak is our faith when we suffer anxiety for any other kind of success to exceed the desire for the endless happiness of those we love; and how little do we feel like Christians when we are surprised and mortified to see them encountering those trials and disappointments which we know to be the most usual and effectual means of promoting spiritual life I have just received an account of the severe trial of one of whom, judging

Digitized by Google

as the world judges, one should say that severe affliction was not needed. But God sees not as man;—those whom he loves best he ordinarily chastens most, that they may be "seven times refined." "To him that hath shall be given, that he may have abundantly." * * * * Poor Mrs. —— what an unhappy life must hers be! unspeakably more unhappy than it would be if she were wholly destitute of that "little religion," as it is called, that she has! To see age tenaciously clinging to the receding world, is the most melancholy and disgusting sight this evil world presents. * * *

* * * In so small a society as that with which we are connected here, zeal, for want of stimulus, is apt to sink into total torpor. In this respect there are advantages in living in a large town, where the zeal of the few keeps the lukewarmness of the many from freezing. I feel heavily the peculiar responsibility that attaches to me as a single woman, remembering that of such it should be said that "She careth for the things of the Lord;" while, partly from indolence, and partly from a sort of infelicity in dealing with others, I am too apt to recoil from those very duties which seem to lie most in my way. "She hath done what she could," is a sentence which often strikes painfully on my conscience. It is high praise, and what sacrifice can be too great to deserve it? * * * .

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XV.

VISITS, AND CORRESPONDENCE FROM ONGAR.

THREE or four years were thus passed at home by my sister, in the quiet discharge of domestic and religious duties; interrupted only by occasional visits to her friends. During this time, the slow progress of her complaint kept her mind in a state of anxiety, and deterred her from attempting to execute some literary projects which had often employed her thoughts;—besides keeping up her correspondence with her friends, and writing the papers before mentioned, she composed, I believe, nothing but the fragment which stands first among the Poetical Remains; and some pieces expressive of personal feeling; of which two or three are also now printed.

Besides the delicate and declining state of her own health, my sister's thoughts were much occupied by the continued illness of her father:—during these times of domestic affliction, it was impossible for her to abstract her attention from present interests. In the autumn of the year 1820, she attended him to Margate; and had the pleasure of seeing her beloved parent surmount a disorder which had long threatened his life.

Early in the following year, Miss Taylor again left home, to visit her sister, Mrs. Gilbert: she continued at Hull more than four months; in

Digitized by Google

which time she made excursions to York and Scarborough. In this visit she seemed to enjoy the pleasures of general society more than at any former time. Yet it was but for an hour that ever the flattering attentions she often received abroad drew away her thoughts from the domestic circle, within which her heart reposed.

This excursion appeared so much to have improved her general health, that there seemed reason to believe that, so long as her mind could be agreeably occupied, without too much excitement, her complaint might remain in a quiescent state. In this hope, her many kind friends in Yorkshire, Devon, and in the neighborhood of London, warmly urged her to pass her time in successive visits among them:—she felt deeply the kindness of these invitations; and believed also that this frequent change of scene, and these social pleasures, would be more likely than any other means to promote her recovery. But she determined rather to remain at home. This determination, I have reason to know, was influenced chiefly by a regard to her religious interests; for she had felt, with regret and fear, the effects of continued external excitements, in diverting her attention from objects of supreme importance. She trembled at the danger of losing sight of her highest hopes: she wished, now, to call home her thoughts, and to converse with her own heart, without interruption. Such were the motives which she repeatedly avowed to those with whom she was accustomed

Digitized by Google

to converse confidentially, when urged to avail herself of the kind invitations of her friends:—"I find," she often said, "that *home* is the place that suits me best."

It was, therefore, with a free and deliberate preference of the interests of the soul to those of this life, that she returned to seclusion, and to the offices of christian charity, when she had every facility, and strong motives for pursuing a different course.

But that tranquillity and abstraction from earthly interests which she so much desired and enjoyed, was not to be of long continuance; for soon after her return to Ongar, she found herself unexpectedly placed in circumstances in which her feelings became deeply interested; and the results of which continued, through the short remainder of her life, to keep her mind in a state of painful agitation, and to call into the fullest exercise her christian principles. Her health also suffered, as must be supposed, from the same causes; and from this time, she herself distinctly anticipated the fatal termination of the disease that had so long threatened her life.

The house at Marden Ash, near Ongar, in which my father had lived eight years, being at this time let with the farm to which it belonged, he removed from it to a house which he purchased in the town. This new abode, though altogether more commodious than the last, was so much less suited to my sister's tastes, that she felt many regrets

Digitized by Google

at the removal, and it evidently increased the depression of her spirits; and thus hastened the progress of her disorder. In the autumn of the year 1821, attended by one of her brothers, and a nephew, she visited Margate, where she placed herself under a new medical direction, and with the view of giving full effect to the course of remedies recommended, she passed the following winter months near London, where she could have the advantage of constant advice. The months passed in this way gave her the pleasure and advantage of daily intercourse with a new friend, to whose kindness and christian counsels she thought herself deeply indebted. At this time, her opinion of her own case had become decidedly unfavorable, though still, when alarming symptoms abated, she admitted the hope of recovery. The state of her mind under these circumstances, was neither so tranquil as she wished, nor so much agitated as those who knew the timidity of her disposition had feared it would have been.

Her feelings are described in a letter to Mrs. Gilbert; from which the following passages are extracted:—after informing her sister of the unfavorable opinion of her case, which had been given by two surgeons whom she had lately consulted, she says—

"You may judge then, dear Ann, what my expectations are, when I calmly and steadily view my present circumstances. Of late, too, I

Digitized by Google

have felt my general health more affected than hitherto. But it requires *much*, utterly to extinguish the hope of recovery:—with God, nothing is impossible. Besides, it is really difficult, while occupied with the usual pursuits of life, and while able to go in and out, much as usual—it is difficult to realize the probability of death at hand. But it comes strangely across me at times, when, forgetting it, I have been planning as usual, for the future. Then a dark cloud overshadows me, and hides all earthly concerns from my sight; and I hear the murmurs of the deep waters: I expect I shall have deep waters to pass through;—already I feel 'the sting of death;' but am not without hope that it may be taken away."

Though the hope of recovery continued to agitate her mind, still her principal anxiety related to her hope of the better life. The doubts that, at times, distressed her, took their rise, for the most part, from the high notions she had formed of the requirements of Christianity. Of the way of salvation, as a free and full provision of mercy, she seemed to have a clear apprehension; but she had long believed, that, from the want of a sufficiently explicit, particular, and authoritative exposition of the *law* of Christ, as given to us in His discourses, and in the preceptive parts of the epistles, the *Gospel* is extensively and fatally abused in the professedly christian world; and she trembled lest the flatteries of self-love should delude her into a similar presumption.

Digitized by Google

It will be seen, from her letters, with how much pleasure she listened to those preachers with whom the great doctrine of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, is the principal subject; and who, following the example of the apostles, make the freest offer of this salvation to their hearers. But still, she listened with jealousy, to the glad tidings thus proclaimed, unless constantly accompanied with a fearless, distinct, and uncompromising exposition of the parallel truth, that "every one shall receive according to his works." Her frequent expressions were such as these—"I have no doubt as to the way of salvation:—it lies upon the surface of the Scriptures; and appeals with the force of truth to every heart that is humbled by the conviction of personal guilt: but those who shall receive the benefit of this free salvation, and who shall be 'accounted worthy to stand before the throne,' are those who, on earth, are meet for heaven, by being truly like Christ:—and am I—are the mass of those of whom we are accustomed to think well—are they like Christ?"

Entertaining such views, my sister was often distressed with the apprehension that there are indeed "few who shall be saved;" and not being able to class herself among the few whose eminent holiness of temper, and of life, and whose abounding labors in the Lord, distinguish them, beyond doubt, as the disciples of Christ, she was long unable to admit the comfort of assured hope.

Digitized by Google

Whatever may be thought of this state of mind, and of the justness of those views which were the occasions of it, I have thought it right to mention them, and, if it may suggest profitable reflection, to leave the subject with the reader.

Miss Taylor had, in consequence of peculiar circumstances, become deeply concerned for the welfare of the orphan family of a deceased friend. Her anxiety on their behalf, prompted her to address them, collectively, in the following letter:—

TO MISS S. M. AND HER SISTERS AND BROTHERS.

Ongar, Aug. 15, 1822.

* * * As my time is limited, I cannot devote much of it to subjects of inferior moment; but must address myself at once to that which is all important, and in which all other advices are included. But in treating this subject there is a peculiar difficulty in addressing those who, like you, are continually reminded of its importance, both by private and public instructions; to whom, therefore, every argument is familiar, and must appear common-place. Nor would I be thought to infer, by any remarks I may make, that your minds are not already impressed, more or less, with the importance of the subject. But from experience I know what need there is of being incessantly quickened and roused afresh; and it sometimes happens, that a word from a comparative stranger, has more effect than the same thing suggested by a familiar voice.

Digitized by Google

But now I know not where to begin, nor how to find language to reach the heights and depths of this boundless subject. No language indeed can do this: and therefore we find in the Scriptures no attempt is made beyond the most plain and simple statements; but which are, on that very account, the more striking. What, for instance, could the utmost powers of language add in force to that question—"What shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?" And, my dear friends, there *is* very great danger, notwithstanding all the warnings and admonitions we receive—there is very great danger of losing our souls! It is so easy to pass on from one stage of life to another—from youth to age, with good intentions towards religion, and with a common, respectable attention to it, without once coming to the point—without once tasting the happiness of a good hope, or enjoying the supreme satisfaction of making a full surrender of our hearts and lives to God. Multitudes of the professors of religion thus live and thus die—making their comfort and prosperity in this life their chief object of pursuit; and paying only so much attention to religion as they deem *absolutely necessary* to escape eternal destruction. But this is not Christianity, such as the Scriptures describe it: and it is surprising that, with the Bible in their hands, any persons can make so great a mistake about it. If God has not our *hearts*, we are not His:—He will accept nothing less. If

Digitized by Google

our affections are not in heaven, we shall never reach it. I remember that, during my youth, I was for many years greatly discouraged, and almost in despair at last, on this account—feeling the impossibility of bringing my earthly mind to prefer spiritual things—to love God better than the world. At length, in a letter from a pious friend, I was reminded that this great work, though impossible to me, was easy to Him; and that he had promised to do it for all who ask. From that time my difficulties began to yield. I saw how absurd it was to doubt the promise of God; and that it was in respect to these very difficulties that he says "Seek and ye shall find." So that I began to see with unspeakable joy that the hardness, reluctance, and earthliness of my heart were no real obstacles, provided that I did but apply to Him for a cure. Yes, to cast ourselves entirely on God, to do all for us, in the diligent use of means, is the sure—the only way to obtain the benefit. But it is surprising what reluctance there is in the mind to do this; and how ready we are to try every other means first; especially we are unwilling to come by a simple act of faith to the Saviour, and to accept from Him a remedy for all the evils of our nature; although there is no other way: how much labor is often lost for want of this. Come to Him, my dear friends, and "He will not cast you out." He declares He will not: and come as you are. It is Satan's constant artifice to persuade us that

Digitized by Google

we must wait till we are *fit* to come; and as this faith that believes and lives, however simple, is the gift of God, pray incessantly—importunately, till you receive it.

I am sure you are all convinced already that delay, neglect, or indifference in religion, is the greatest folly—the deepest cruelty we can practise towards ourselves, as it respects our interests in the future world. And, indeed, it is so as to this world too. I have seen something more of life than you; and I have lived long enough to see that promise in numerous instances fulfilled, that, "they who seek first the kingdom God," have other things added to them, in a more especial and desirable way than those who make them the primary object. I am firmly convinced that, taking the whole of life together, the most pious and devoted persons—such as made an early and complete surrender of heart and life to God, have most real prosperity and success in this world, as well as infinitely more enjoyment of earthly good. But really this is a point scarcely worth proving, when the interests of a boundless futurity are concerned; yet as it is one of the chief illusions of "the father of lies" to persuade persons that, in becoming decidedly religious, they must sacrifice the choicest pleasures of life, and that God's ways are not "ways of pleasantness," it is desirable to expose the falsehood. All the real and reasonable enjoyments of life are entirely compatible, not only with an ordinary profession of

Digitized by Google

religion, but with the highest spirituality of mind; and are greatly sweetened by it, if kept in their subordinate place: and as for the rest—the gaiety, the vanity, the evil tempers, the restless desires of a worldly heart, its selfishness and frowardness, and all those indulgences which are forbidden to us, they are as certainly destructive of our true interests and happiness here, as of our eternal happiness. Of this truth, experience too late convinces the most successful votaries of this world. But let us rise above these lower considerations;—the question is—are we desirous to secure the salvation of our souls? And it is impossible to fix a steady thought on eternity without being so. Then let us take the Bible for our rule, and never rest till we have a scriptural foundation for our hope; nor till our life, as well as our creed, is conformed to its precepts and examples. Allow me then to mention those means which are most essential to the attainment of this happiness.

To use means is our part;—it is a comparatively easy part; and if we will not even do this, it shows that we are not at all in earnest on the subject. I will mention then, as the first and the last—as that which is indispensable to our making any progress in religion,—*daily, constant, private, prayer.* I am aware that where this habit has not been formed very early, there may be a sort of awkwardness and false shame felt in the commencement of it in a family; but it is *false shame,*

Digitized by Google

which a little effort will conquer; and a short time entirely remove. I believe you know that it was my intention to have recommended this practice to you if not already adopted; and now I cannot feel satisfied without doing so; for if ever I was sure that I was giving good advice, I am sure of it in this instance; and I will—I must most earnestly request your attention to it. Perhaps some of you might reply that, seldom feeling inclined to prayer, it would generally be a formal and heartless service; but this is the very reason why it must never be neglected. This reluctance to spiritual engagements is what the best of Christians have to combat with; and it can only be overcome by prayer. If then you were to wait till you are of yourselves so disposed, depend upon it, you would pass through life, and plunge into eternity in a prayerless state; and although you may often engage in private devotion with little feeling, and no apparent benefit, yet there is one certain advantage gained by it, namely—that the habit is strengthened; and as we are creatures of habit, and God has made us so, He requires us to avail ourselves of its important advantages. If there is any one thing more than another among the many privileges of a religious education for which I feel thankful, it is the having been trained from my early years to retire, morning and evening, for this purpose. I found that a habit thus early and strongly formed, was not easily broken through, notwithstanding all the

Digitized by Google

vanity of my youthful years: and however much I have to lament the abuse of it, yet, if ever I have known any thing of religion, it is to the closet that I must trace it; and I believe that universal experience testifies that our comfort and progress in the divine life are entirely regulated by the punctuality and fervency of our engagements there. There is no need that the exercise should be tedious;—a short portion of scripture read with thought; and a few simple sentences uttered with the whole heart, are far preferable to a much longer address, in which the same heartless phraseology is continually repeated. But as your desires enlarge, so will your petitions; and the more you are in earnest, the less liable you will be to fall into hackneyed and formal expressions.

There is another practice which, next to prayer and reading the scriptures, I have found most profitable;—I mean reading once every day, at the time either of morning or evening retirement, a few pages of some pious book—selecting for this purpose, not the light productions of the day, but the writings of the most eminently useful and impressive authors. Christian biography also, is peculiarly profitable. This custom need not add more than ten minutes to the time of retirement; and it is, I think, one of the very best means for retaining a daily impression of serious things. Habit also (try it for one month, and see if it is not so) will render this pleasant, even though it

Digitized by Google

should seem irksome at first. If you will excuse my entering into such minute particulars (which I should not do on any other subject) I will add that the most advantageous time for the purposes I have recommended is not that of retiring for the night;—drowsiness will generally invade us then; besides, few young people can be quite alone at that time, and a prayer said by the bed-side, with a companion present, is not—I might almost say *cannot* be personal prayer. It is a good—I will call it a blessed custom, for a family to disperse to their respective places of retirement half an hour before supper. Nor is it, you must be aware, from my own experience alone that I recommend it; for it is a practice which I know to be strictly observed by all my pious friends, and which I have remarked in every serious family in which I ever visited. As to the morning, it is highly desirable that it should take place before breakfast, as afterwards it interferes with other duties, and is in great danger of being quite neglected. Besides, it is as essential to the health of the body, as of the soul, to rise at least early enough for such a purpose. I fear I shall tire you, and will mention but one other thing, and that is the advantage of a more particular improvement of Sabbath evenings, as the time most suitable for longer retirement, and deeper thoughtfulness than the engagements of other days will admit.

My dear friends, be not contented with low aims and small attainments in religion:—they are

Digitized by Google

indeed fearful signs of insincerity; or, at best, proceed from a merely slavish fear of the consequences of quite neglecting it. O do aspire to something beyond an ordinary reputable profession of it! *Here* ambition is sanctified. Determine to number yourselves among the happy few; and do not be discouraged by difficulties, nor think it too much for you to attain. It is not humility, but inactivity and despondency, that leads us to think so. God will give us all the grace, and strength and ability, we really desire and ask for.

And let me affectionately recommend you early to seek to be engaged in some sphere of active usefulness. Doing good is the most excellent means of getting good. There is no mistake greater than to suppose that we are sent into the world only to attend, however industriously, to our own personal, or even family interests. Love to our neighbor demands our active exertions in his behalf; and we are all required, more or less, "to go and work in the vineyard." We have all a talent intrusted to us; and what shall we say when our Lord comes, if we have not improved it? Did you never remark in reading the 16th chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, how St. Paul, in his salutations, particularizes those who were most zealously engaged in good works?—"Phebe, a servant of the church, and a succourer of many;"—"Priscilla and Aquila, his helpers in Christ;"—"Mary, who bestowed much labor on them;"—"Persis, who labored much in the

Digitized by Google

Lord;"—while he passes over with a slight remembrance, or notes with censure, others, who "minded only their own things, and not the things that are Jesus Christ's." It must have been gratifying to have been thus distinguished by the apostles; but O, how much more so to be approved by Him, who for our good requires these services from us; and to hear Him say at last,—"Well done, good and faithful servant!" We should suffer no day to pass without thinking of, and acting for *that* day when we shall be "judged according to our works," as the only evidences of our faith; and very encouraging is that kind and considerate expression of our Lord, concerning a poor woman, showing that He is no hard master, and not unreasonable in His requisitions—"She hath done what she could." But how few of us deserve this praise! I am persuaded you would find useful activity one of the best preservatives against the innumerable temptations to which, as youth advances, you will be exposed. How many young persons have blessed God that ever they were led to engage in Sunday school teaching. It profitably occupies that time which, if wasted in frivolity and indulgence, leads to the worst consequences; and in teaching others, a double blessing often descends upon the teacher.

But in engaging in active usefulness, especially when we are required to associate with others, there are evils to be guarded against; and we must be clad with the impenetrable armour of chris-

Digitized by Google

tian simplicity and meekness, in order to avoid them. We may have to encounter those who are officious, unreasonable, monopolizing, ambitious, and overbearing; and if any similar tempers are indulged in ourselves, continual contention must ensue. The only way is to rise superior to those petty jealousies, and inferior motives; to do good for its own sake alone; to persevere in a quiet, forbearing, yielding, line of conduct, which never fails to disappoint and weary out the most troublesome, at last. And even if any should say to us, however unjustly—"Friend, go down lower," our wisdom and happiness is to submit with a good grace, and cheerfully to labor in a humbler sphere. That temper and conduct which is called "spirited," in asserting our rights, and maintaining our consequence, is as unwise and impolitic as it is unchristian-like. Nothing forms so truly great and dignified a character as "the meekness and gentleness of Christ."

But, with regard to our conduct, whether at home or abroad, we cannot mistake if we will but follow the precepts of scripture, in their plain and literal sense. This is too much neglected—strangely neglected, even by those who profess to make the Bible their rule. If we had no other directions whatever for our conduct than those contained in that beautiful chapter, the 12th to the Romans, it would make a heaven of earth, were they but attended to. It is an excellent chapter to read very often, and deeply and daily

Digitized by Google

to study.—It would make a little paradise of any society or family where its spirit was imbibed; and after all, it is at home—in the bosom of our families, in our daily and hourly tempers and conduct, that we have the best opportunity of practising holy obedience to the commandments of Christ. Keeping these commandments, which "are not grievous"—though we are prone to think they are, till we try, implies a continual exercise of self-denial; and if we are conscious that we make no such sacrifices—that we are not in the habit of denying ourselves, it is plain that we are not following Him at all; for those who do must bear some cross. There is indeed something in the very sound of this word *self-denial*, which alarms our indolence, indulgence, pride, and wilfulness; but it is a false alarm; for these very qualities—indolence, indulgence, pride, and wilfulness, are the greatest enemies to our peace and happiness; and one day's experience is enough to show that, in proportion as they are resisted and mortified, we are comfortable, tranquil, and happy.

May God bless you all, and lead every one of you safely through this dangerous world, to his eternal rest! This is the earnest hope, and will be the frequent prayer of your sincere and affectionate friend, J. T.

To the young lady, who, as the eldest of the same orphan family, sustained the responsibility of caring for her sisters and brothers, Miss Taylor writes—

Digitized by Google

Ongar, June 7, 1823.

* * * Do you remember the remark, that the reason why, in the history of our country, the female reigns have been most prosperous, is, that women, feeling their own insufficiency to hold the reins of government, have been more ready than kings, to depend upon the advice and assistance of wise and able counsellors? Hence it has been said, that in female reigns, we have been governed by *men;* while kings have often allowed themselves and their kingdom, to be governed by women. Certainly as much wisdom and prudence may be shown in the choice of advisers, as even in determining important affairs ourselves. But above all, my dear friend, your safety and wisdom will be to "ask counsel of the Lord;" and that, not only in a general way, but with a firm and steady dependence on Him, to do what you ask of Him; and this will not be to order things in any particular way that you feel most anxious for; but to overrule them so as He knows to be best for you. "Commit your way unto the Lord, and He *will* direct your paths;" but I dare say you are already sufficiently acquainted with your own heart to know that it is no easy thing to do this unreservedly. We are so prone secretly to dictate to His Providence, instead of feeling an entire resignation to it. I will venture to add one more particular recommendation; and that is, that in the choice of persons to advise you in regard to your future

Digitized by Google

domestic arrangements, you will select those only who, in addition to worldly prudence, are qualified by the *most decided piety* to counsel you.

I remember several years ago, a very wise, kind, and good man said to me, that as a general rule (though certainly not without exceptions), it will be found, when we have a choice to make in regard to our affairs, that the decision which is least agreeable to our inclinations, is most conducive to our ultimate welfare. This remark I have never forgotten; and I have often since proved the justness and utility of it, notwithstanding its apparent severity. I quote it to you with less hesitation, because I know that, in any arrangements in which the pleasures and relaxations of young persons are concerned, I am always disposed to lean to the side of indulgence, to a degree which I have often been blamed for. And I tell you that you may not too hastily conclude my opinions in such matters to be stern or rigid.
* * *

To the second daughter of this family, she addressed several letters, from among which the following is selected:—

TO MISS E. M * * * * * *.

Ongar, Dec 19, 1823

My dear Elizabeth,

It is only the thought of your being too busy to attend to any thing but the business in hand, that has prevented my writing before, to welcome you

Digitized by Google

into the new house;—or, perhaps, if I had followed the dictates of my own feelings, and consulted yours—I should rather have condoled with you on forsaking the old one. I can guess what feelings have been uppermost with you in every interval of bustle; and though not in fact, yet in thought, I have paced with you through the deserted rooms—sympathizing with you in the remembrances they awaken. I am no stranger to local attachments, and I respect them in others, as indications of better feelings. The trees, the walks, the walls, that seem so dear, are chiefly so as they are associated in our minds with those we love, to whom they have been equally familiar. Sorrow in parting with these objects, is, therefore, an amiable regret; and it will be felt in proportion as *home*—its inhabitants, and its quiet pursuits, have been loved and enjoyed. Cowper has sanctioned such feelings in addressing his mother's picture:—

> "Where once we lived, our name is heard no more;
> Children not thine have trod our nursery floor," &c.

But, my dear girl, while I sympathize with your sorrow, and more than that, love you for it, yet you know I would not encourage its unrestrained indulgence. The proper and effectual antidote to every undue and morbid indulgence of regret is to be found in the cheerful performance of the daily recurring duties of life; which, by the wise appointment of Providence, prevent brooding melancholy, while they do not tend (like the relief

Digitized by Google

sought in amusements and society) to blunt the edge of genuine feeling. * * *

The youngest brother, then at school, she addressed as follows, three months only before her death:—

Ongar, Jan. 16, 1824.

Dear John,

Ever since you first went to K——, I have felt a wish to write to you, but have deferred it till this time, thinking that letters from your friends might be most acceptable during the vacation, on account of the little disappointment you have undergone in not returning home. I was very much pleased to hear how cheerfully you submitted to the decision of your friends respecting this; the consciousness of which, will, I am sure, afford you much more solid satisfaction, than if you could have prevailed on them by childishly pleading to return.

I have also heard with very great pleasure, the good accounts that have reached your sisters respecting your conduct at school; and hope you will feel a laudable ambition to *maintain* this good character. We all know that it is an easier thing to set out well while there is the stimulus of novelty to excite us, than steadily to persevere in a good course. Yet I need not remind you, that nothing short of such steady perseverance in well doing, will avail anything to your real advantage; and it is this alone, that truly merits praise. You

Digitized by Google

cannot, therefore, guard too carefully against the first small temptations that may present themselves, of whatever kind: if these are yielded to, others more powerful will quickly follow; and thus, for want of a little timely effort, every good resolution may eventually fail. "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." You are now old enough, dear John, to reflect seriously; and let me advise you to endeavor to gain some acquaintance with your own disposition, in order to correct what may be amiss; and whatever you discover to be the fault to which you are most liable, and the temptations by which you are most easily overcome, there set a double guard, and resist them as your *worst enemies*.

It has been frequently remarked by those who are engaged in education, that pupils who show most quickness, and make most progress in their studies, are the least worthy of praise in other, and *more important* respects. Now, dear John, do not let this be your case; never be content with half a character; but be still more ambitious to distinguish yourself for obedience, gentleness, kindness, and a resolute resistance of all that you know to be wrong, than for any mental attainments, remembering that cleverness, unconnected with goodness, proves a curse, rather than a blessing.

On the other hand, allow me to remind you of the great importance of diligently improving your present opportunities for acquiring knowledge.

Digitized by Google

How valuable knowledge is, and how glad you will be of it in future life, you can scarcely at present imagine; and be assured, no time will ever arrive when the business you have now to attend to can better be done, even if it could be done at all. But it has truly been said, that time and opportunities lost in one period of life, can never be recovered in another, because every portion of life is fully occupied with its own proper engagements, so that what is lost through negligence in childhood or youth, is lost irrecoverably. Now, the only way to make real proficiency in learning of any kind, is to acquire a love of it for its own sake; and this may always be done by taking pains. Never be contented with merely getting through your daily tasks in order to escape fines and punishments. No boy of sound sense, and of a strong mind, will need to be governed by such motives: he will find a pleasure in that daily round of business, which, to the sluggish or trifling, is all toil; and those difficulties which discourage and disgust the idle, do but stimulate the diligent to greater efforts.

But, my dear John, let me still more urgently entreat you not to suffer either business or pleasure to divert your mind from what you know is all important. Oh do not indulge that foolish and false idea, that the great concerns of religion may be put off to a future day. Do but try, and you will find that "the fear of the Lord is indeed the beginning of wisdom," and that they who seek him

Digitized by Google

early, enjoy his peculiar favor and blessing on all the pursuits and events of life: and you, bereaved as you are of earthly friends, how much more than you can possibly at present imagine, do you need God to be your Father, and the Guide of your unprotected youth! Study His will then by constantly reading the Scriptures, and seek him for yourself by earnest prayer, and be assured you will not seek in vain. I will not apologize for not writing you an entertaining letter; since it is the desire I feel for your truest good, that induces me to fill it with such plain advice, persuaded that you will not only receive it kindly, but peruse it with attention and serious thought. You have heard how much your sister and I were disappointed in not being able to visit you while we were at Bedford; the bad weather rendered it quite impossible. Believe me, dear John,

Your affectionate Friend.

I find a letter dated the day after the above, and it is almost the last written by my sister, who from this time became incapable of maintaining her usual epistolary intercourse with her friends.

TO MISS M. H—E.

Ongar, January 17, 1824.

* * * I rejoice to hear of your continued prosperity; and am not surprised that the pressure of so important a charge should, at times, depress your spirits; nor that even your

Digitized by Google

happiest seasons should be clouded by the distraction of mind consequent upon it: especially while it is yet new to you. There are doubtless advantages in a life of leisure which, if duly improved, would tend greatly to heighten the happiness of the christian life. But, considering what our depraved nature is, there is a strong probability that they will *not* be improved. So that, if I might so speak, I believe the chances are greater of making spiritual progress in a life of activity, or even of bustle, than when the mind is left at leisure to prey upon itself, and indulge its morbid propensities.

I thank you, my dear friend, for planning so pleasant a scheme as that of my visiting you at Manchester. I will not say it can never be; yet I cannot indulge the expectation of my health permitting me to undertake so long a journey. I have been very much indisposed, for many weeks past, with a severe attack of rheumatism, which has greatly confined me to the house, and affected my general health. From this, I am thankful to say, I am slowly recovering; but in other respects, I cannot boast of improvement; yet the chastisements with which I am visited are still lighter than my expectations; and how much lighter than my desert! I am endeavoring, but with small success, "to forget the things that are behind, and to press forward." But O, how little can affliction in *itself* do to produce spiritual affections! I feel this; and that without the grace of

Digitized by Google

God to help me, all these rendings from life and earthly happiness will be in vain.

* * * I have lately taken a final leave of Mrs. —— the friend of my happier days: it was but a short interview; but we had time to take a hasty and impressive retrospect of the past;——of life, such as we had each found it; and to compare our early expectations with those circumstances in which we are at present placed. —The moral was obvious—"This is not our rest." * * *

CHAPTER XVI.

LAST ILLNESS, AND DEATH.

The last two letters have anticipated the course of the Memoir, to which I now revert. On the occasion of the death of her uncle, the Rev. James Hinton, of Oxford, which occurred in the month of July, Miss Taylor was impressed with the belief that death was not to visit the family with "a single blow;" and this foreboding was not falsified, for, in the following November, another uncle—Mr. Charles Taylor (the Editor of Calmet) was removed; and in a few months more, her own death took place.

With the hope of at least recruiting her spirits, my sister, accompanied by her brother, and a

Digitized by Google

young friend visited Margate, once again; where she passed the month of October, tranquilly and pleasantly: on her return, she went to Bedford; and availed herself of the opportunity to visit Olney and Weston: the feelings of the moment she has expressed in the lines written on visiting Cowper's garden. Her return from Bedford took place at the time of an extraordinary inundation; and she, with the young friend who accompanied her, was exposed to considerable peril in the journey.

At this time, she was so far exempt from suffering, or any positive inconvenience from the disease that was preying upon her constitution, and her ordinary comfort was so little impaired, that she took her part in the common engagements of life, with scarcely any apparent diminution of her wonted activity and animation. In these respects she was indeed remarkably favored by the goodness of God: for, to the last, her sufferings were only those consequent upon extreme debility.—The local disease insensibly prevailed over the strength of her constitution, with little external show of its progress, and with scarcely any positive pain. This exemption from suffering was noted by herself, and her family, as calling for lively gratitude to the Father of mercies.

The event might probably have been somewhat different, had not new symptoms been induced by accidental exposure to cold. On the 21st of November my sister went to London, to take leave

Digitized by Google

of one of her most intimate friends, who was then preparing to leave England. This interview, it was known by both parties, must terminate a friendship of long standing, and of unusual tenderness and confidence: the meeting was therefore protracted as long as possible, so as to allow my sister to return to Ongar the same day. Being unable to procure a coach, she and her friend took boat at Lambeth, late in the afternoon; and proceeded as far as London Bridge, through a chilly rain. This exposure produced general pains, which from that time, continued to be the principal cause of her suffering, and, apparently, of the rapid decay of her strength.

Notwithstanding her extreme weakness, she still continued to attend public worship; and even to teach her class in the Sunday school. The last time of her doing so, was on the 4th of January.—She went to the meeting-house, accompanied by the friend before mentioned, whom, after teaching the children the usual time, she took to a window, overlooking the burial ground; and pointing to a spot opposite, said—"There Betsey,—that is where my grave is to be." The same afternoon a funeral sermon was preached for a highly esteemed friend—the mother of a large family, whose death had very deeply affected her. She looked at the weeping family; and deliberately realized the scene, as she believed, soon to be repeated in the same place, when her own family should be the mourners.

Digitized by Google

Either by the too great excitement of her feelings on this occasion; or by her exposure to the weather, her symptoms seemed to be aggravated from this time:—her breathing became so quick and feeble, as to keep her spirits in constant agitation, and almost to prevent her joining in conversation. She still took her place in the family circle; though it had now become necessary that she should be carried from the parlor to her chamber.

Partly from the impulse of that restlessness which often attends a last illness, and with the hope of deriving at least some alleviation from medical advice, she determined, in the month of February, upon spending a week with her young friends at Newington, whose affection towards her gave her the assurance that she should find all the comforts of home in their house. Though extremely distressed by the exertion of being placed in the chaise, the journey seemed greatly to revive her:—she in some measure enjoyed the society of her friends; and returned home in amended health. She describes her feelings about this time, in the following letter to her sister:—

Ongar, March 24, 1824.

* * * "I hope the pleasant excursion to Nottingham will do you both good. Give my kind love to C—— and S——, of whom I often think; but I now refrain from writing to any one,

Digitized by Google

unless it is absolutely necessary. I feel much obliged by Mr. ——'s kind remembrance of me: —tell him so when you have an opportunity: as to writing three verses, or one, for his Album, it has been, and is, quite impossible.

"You heard from mother that I went to town for advice. I was most kindly nursed there for a week; and returned much better; nor have I since had a violent return of that tremendous heaving of my breath, which I can compare only to an inward tempest. This laborious breathing, however, though relieved, has never subsided entirely, since I first felt it, which was from the commencement of the rheumatic attack. The weather, for some weeks past, has been very unfavorable to me. I think there is still a hope that my strength and appetite may be restored, at least to what they were, when I am able to take the air; and perhaps to change it. But I more often think that a gradual decline has commenced; and if you were to see how much I am reduced, you would not wonder at my forming such an opinion. My bones indeed 'look and stare upon me;'—my strength too fails me, so that I cannot walk more than once or twice across the room at a time; and whenever I do, I feel as if all within me was hanging in heavy rags. Whenever the weather permits, I am drawn round the garden, which is a great refreshment.

"I need not tell you how kindly I am nursed; and how tenderly all is done that can be done for

Digitized by Google

my relief and comfort. I have also to be thankful for being so free from pain;—my suffering now is almost entirely from debility, and weariness, and difficulty of breathing; but what I am most of all thankful for, is, that the prospect of death is less formidable to me, owing to my having more 'peace in believing;' and an increase of this is all I want, in order to reconcile me to it entirely. I often think too, that if I am taken off by a gradual decay, I ought to rejoice, as being thereby rescued, probably, from far greater suffering: but I desire to leave it all with God.

"I hope you do not forget that this summer is your time for coming to Ongar. For a long time I have been looking forward to it as affording a hope of our meeting once more; which I am sure we should both wish. We do not like the thought of Mr. Gilbert's coming so far south without our seeing him: could you not both come on from Nottingham? Though, unless I should become rapidly worse, it would be better for you to come when the season is more advanced. Dear Ann, and Mr. Gilbert, remember me in your prayers, as I am sure you do.

Your affectionate sister,

JANE."

Neither Jane herself, nor her family, fully apprehended the now near approach of dissolution;—some degree of delusion is very frequent in such cases—and in this, the flatteries of hope were strengthened by that calmness and fortitude,

Digitized by Google

and reluctance to receive any assistance she could possibly dispense with, which, in great measure, concealed the progress of her decline: and also by the undiminished vigor of her mind, and the unabated interest she took in every thing with which she was wont to be concerned.

Though she had, at this time, become incapable of long continued religious exercises, yet, to the last day of her life, the stated times of retirement were observed by her. Usually in the evening, by her request, her brother read to her some portion of scripture, and a few pages of Bennett's Christian Oratory—a book she highly valued. On these occasions her conversation, though not elevated by the language of unclouded hope, frequently contained the expression of a humble and growing trust in the power and grace of the Saviour.

Happily for herself, my sister's imagination which, throughout her life, had been too much alive to ideas of terror, seemed in a great degree quelled by the languors of disease. Thus her mind was relieved from those unreal fears which, otherwise, might have possessed her thoughts, in the near prospect of death. Still, occasionally, she seemed to be contending with what she acknowledged to be horrors of the imagination only.—"Oh!" she would say, "the grave!—the grave is dark and cold!—But surely, even to the wicked there is no suffering in the *grave*." For some time she seemed much distressed with the

Digitized by Google

apprehension of her remains being disturbed after burial: but from this fear she was relieved by an explicit promise, that such precautions should be taken as should render such disturbance impossible. For the most part, however, the higher and the real interests of the future life occupied their proper place in her thoughts; and whatever other anxieties might harass her for a moment, she quickly returned to this sentiment—

> "If sin be pardoned, I'm secure:
> Death has no sting besides."

She had, for months past, been wishing to transcribe her will, with a view of amending it in some particulars; but had deferred doing so, in the hope of a return of strength, which might make her more equal to the task: but feeling now her powers of body rapidly declining, she roused herself by an extraordinary effort, and in a way quite characteristic of herself: for it was always some endeavor to promote the comfort or interests of those she loved, that called forth the vigor of her mind. She was therefore supported (April 5th) at her desk, and continued writing with evidently a very painful effort, more than an hour: she completed her task in the three or four following days. I may just take the occasion to say that, in the disposal of her affairs, she was guided by the most exact impartiality—acting consistently with the principle she had often warmly professed, and which is so rarely regarded—that there can be no more right to do wrong, (by indulging ca-

Digitized by Google

pricious preferences,) in making a will, than in any other transaction of life.

Though the least exertion had now become distressingly painful, her mind was so perfectly collected, that the transcript of her will was made without errors, and the parts in which it differed from the original, were expressed with her wonted perspicuity; she also, the same afternoon in which she completed her task, entered some payments in her accounts, as well as the daily memorandums in her pocket-book, which are complete to the Thursday before her death.

On Saturday she was visited by the medical gentleman whom she had consulted when last in London. She was then, though actually dying, so little aware of the near approach of death, that she asked his opinion of the practicability of her leaving home for change of air. After he left her, however, recollecting his expressions, and manner of replying to her inquiries, she inferred the truth; and on Sunday plainly indicated to her family that she did so.

Her last Sabbath was passed tranquilly:—several times in the course of it she exerted her utmost strength to converse with her mother, into whose mind she endeavored to pour that consolation which she knew would be much needed. In the evening she conversed separately with her father and brother; and to them, as before to her mother, she professed her settled hope of heaven;

Digitized by Google

to the latter she said—"I am now quite happy—as happy as my poor frame will bear."

On Monday she came down to the parlor at the usual hour, and was calm in spirit; seeming distressed only by increased debility. During the morning she conversed for some time with her brother, who received her dying wishes and injunctions: and an emphatic expression of affection, which will ever sound fresh in his recollection, as if heard but yesterday. In the afternoon she resolved to make a last effort to finish a letter to her young friends at Newington. For this purpose her brother supported her in his arms;—for she was now utterly unable to sustain herself: her affectionate earnestness to express to them her deep concern for their highest interests, cost her an effort that seemed as if it must have hastened her dissolution; it is as follows:—

Ongar, April 11, 1824.

My very dear Friends,

I must no longer wait till I am more able to write, as every day I become weaker:—though I know it will give you pain, yet I must tell you that I should not be surprised if these few lines are the last I shall ever be able to send you. I am very ill:—Mr. —— came yesterday to see me; and I assure you he thinks me so. It is possible, he thinks, that a change in the weather may revive me; but I am now so weak that I think there is as much to fear as to hope from the warm

Digitized by Google

weather. However, that I leave:—I will take care that you shall be informed as often as needful, how I go on, to the last; and I shall hope to hear from you; for though I cannot write, I can read a letter. I thank dear E. for her last. I am now indeed too ill to accept your kind invitation.

Monday.

I fear I cannot finish.—Oh, my dear friends, if you knew what thoughts I have now, you would see, as I do, that the whole business of life is preparation for death! let it be so with you. If I have ever written or spoken any thing you deem good advice, be assured I would, if I could, repeat it now with tenfold force. Think of this when I am gone. Tell J. I hope he will read Williams's Diary, and study to become such a character, as a man of business, and a Christian. I wish you all to read it. My love and best wishes to John.

May God bless you all:—farewell! farewell! dear S. dear E., dear P. dear J. farewell! Yours till death, and after that, I hope,

JANE TAYLOR.

In the evening a minister called, with whom she conversed a short time, in a tone of cheerful and confirmed faith. Afterwards with her mother, in terms of intermingled affection, consolation and hope.

When carried up stairs on Monday night, she

Digitized by Google

for the first time, allowed her sister to do every thing for her. She passed the night quietly; but in the morning felt herself unable to rise as usual: —about ten o'clock her brother read a Psalm, and prayed with her. Soon afterwards she was placed in an easy chair by the bed-side. About the same time one of her brothers arrived from London; to him she spoke with the most emphatic earnestness, professing, very distinctly, the ground of her own hope, and the deep sense she then had of the reality and importance of eternal things. Her voice was now deep and hollow—her eye glazed, and the dews of death were on her features; but her recollection was perfect, and her soul full of feeling. While thus sitting up, and surrounded by her family, in a loud, but interrupted voice, she said—"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for Thou art with me: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Soon afterwards she repeated, with the same emphasis, the verse of Dr. Watts—

> "Jesus, to thy dear faithful hand
> My naked soul I trust;
> And my flesh waits for thy command,
> To drop into the dust."

repeating with intense fervor the words—

> "Jesus to thee—my naked soul—
> My naked soul I trust."

Being then placed in bed, all withdrew but

Digitized by Google

her sister, with whom she conversed some time, giving her several particular directions, with great clearness. She then requested that every thing in the room might be put in the most exact order; after this she lay tranquilly an hour or two, seeming to suffer only from the laborious heaving of the chest; and in reply to a question to that effect, said she was "quite comfortable."

In the afternoon she observed her brother to be writing a letter: she inquired to whom; being told it was to Mrs. Gilbert (who, with Mr. Gilbert, was then on her way to Ongar) she gave her opinion as to the best way of ensuring her sister's meeting the letter, so as, if possible, to hasten her arrival. She had just before said—"Well, I don't think now I shall see Ann again; I feel I am dying fast."

From this time she did not again speak so as to be understood; but seemed sensible, till about five o'clock, when a change took place; her breathing became interrupted: still she was tranquil, and her features perfectly placid. At half-past five she underwent a momentary struggle, and ceased to breathe.

The interment took place in the burial-ground of the meeting-house at Ongar, where a simple monument has been erected to mark the spot.

The profile prefixed to this volume was taken some years ago: it has been deemed correct, and characteristic of the original. Yet I have to re-

Digitized by Google

gret my inability to give, in place of it, a *portrait;* but no likeness of my sister exists which would be thought satisfactory by those who knew her. In truth, the expression of her face was of that kind which is the most difficult to be seized by the pencil; for it was the expression of the finest feelings, habitually veiled from observation. Her features were delicately formed, and regular:—her stature below the middle size; every movement bespoke the activity of her mind; and a peculiar archness and sprightliness of manner gave significance and grace to all she did.

But the truest image of the writer's character, is found in the foregoing Extracts from her Correspondence: for her letters were ever the genuine expression of her feelings. Not one of the many of which I have had the perusal, betrays any attempt to write "a clever letter:"—she corresponded with none but *friends*, and her intercourse with those she loved was inspired only by warm and generous affection. This may indeed be named as the prominent feature of her character—for to love, and to be loved, was the happiness she sought.

Once and again, these letters afford acknowledgements of the constitutional irritability of her temper. This irritability was, however, more often excited by excessive concern for the interests of those whom she loved, than by any other cause—I may say *never* by the thwarting of mere selfishness. Her abhorrence of every kind of

Digitized by Google

pretension—of fraud, and of injustice, was indeed, strong; and this feeling, added to her piercing discernment of the secret motives of those with whom she had to do, often occasioned to her much fruitless uneasiness, and might sometimes give to her manner an air of constraint; for, to seem to accept as genuine, either actions or words, which she suspected to be spurious, required a degree of self-command of which she was hardly capable.

In her letters my sister frequently complains, also, of the languor and inertness of her mind; but these expressions might, without explanation, convey a false idea to the reader. It is indeed true that the delicacy of her constitution, especially after it was impaired by mental labors, and by sickness, rendered her liable to much languor; but her disposition, and her habits, were those of activity and diligence. In whatever she undertook, she was assiduous, persevering, and exact; and all her exertions were directed by the love of utility. She was fond of the labors of the needle, and of every domestic engagement. Indeed, so strong were her tastes of this kind—so completely feminine was her character, and so free was she from that ambition which often accompanies intellectual superiority, that had she, early in life, been placed in a sphere of home duties, her talents would probably never have been elicited.

The leisure she enjoyed in the latter years of her life, and the influence of some of her friendships, as well as her own tastes, might have led

Digitized by Google

my sister to pursue the elegancies of literature, but her domestic habits, and the strong sense she had of the relative importance of different objects, alike prevented her from often seeking amusement amid the luxuries of intellect. To the character of a *literary lady* she had, in fact, a decided dislike; both on account of the affectation from which it is seldom exempt, and of the false importance commonly attached by such persons to the most trivial pursuits.

The combination of humor and pensiveness, in the same character, seems to result from some standing law of human nature;—at least, several remarkable instances of the kind might be named. This conjunction of opposite tastes belonged, in a peculiar degree, to my sister's mind, and gave a grace and an interest to the productions of her pen. Without this union and counteraction, humor is apt to become broad and offensive, and pensiveness to sink into sentimentality or dulness. But where it exists, even when both do not actually appear, the one will operate, by a latent influence, to give point and vividness to the most sombre sentiment; while the other serves, at once, to enrich, and to chastise the sports of fancy. To these qualities of my sister's mind were added a fine sense of the beautiful and sublime in nature, and a nice perception of the characteristic points of every object she observed.

In spontaneous conversation, especially on some

Digitized by Google

matters of opinion, she might seem much influenced by peculiar predilections; but whenever she felt herself responsible for the opinion she gave, and especially when she wrote for the press, her judgment was acute and sound, and happily directed by intuitive good sense. Of this excellence, I think, her correspondence with her friends, and the papers contributed to the Youth's Magazine, will furnish frequent and striking instances.

The Poetical Remains exhibit a considerable versatility of talent. My sister first wrote simply to express the overflowing emotions of her heart: —these pieces breathe tenderness; and, relieved as they are by an elegant playfulness, give the truest image of the writer's mind. It was under the guidance of a peculiarly nice ear for the language of nature, that she accommodated these talents to the difficult task of writing verse for children; her compositions of this kind are, for the most part, distinguished by a perfect simplicity and transparency of diction—by brief, exact, and lively descriptions of scenery—by frequent and exquisite touches, both of humor and of pathos, and by a pervading purity and correctness of moral principle.

But her earlier compositions gave little promise of that energy of thought, elevation of sentiment, and force of diction, which appear in the Essays in Rhyme, and in some of the pieces now first published. This long latent vigor of intellect was soon quelled by the languors of sickness: had it

Digitized by Google

been sustained a few years, she would probably have attempted some projects with which her mind was teeming at the time when she found it necessary to abstain from literary occupations. Yet perhaps her delicate frame, even if it had not been shaken by disease and sorrow, could never have sustained the effort necessary to command the thoughts with which, often, her imagination labored.

But whether or not there may be reason to suppose that, under more propitious circumstances, she might have moved, as a writer, in a higher sphere; it is enough to know that her talent has been most beneficially occupied. For, setting aside those of her works which display the most genius, she has, in an unpretending walk of literature, widely scattered the seeds of virtue and piety. Nor can it be doubted that the good fruits of her labors shall endure, and increase, long after those who now cherish a fond remembrance of her virtues in private life, shall have passed away

---

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google